THE MYSTIC CASTLE;

OR,

ORPHAN HEIR.

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE

WANDERER OF THE ALPS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

—Murder, though it have no tongue, will ſpeak
With moſt miraculous organ.——

——Foul deeds will riſe,
(Tho' all the earth o'erwhelm them) to mens eyes.

HAMLET.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE, AT THE

Minerva-Preſs,

LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVI.

Harvard College Library
Mar. 15, 1921
G F Parkman fund

17432.61.25

351.D
49-16
28-2

THE

MYSTIC CASTLE.

CHAP. I.

ALBERT had ſcarce departed, with Sir Reginald, for the Myſtic Caſtle, prompted to the undertaking by many motives, but chiefly with a wiſh ſcrupulouſly to examine a ſituation which

his own ideas, and the words of Hubert, led him to imagine was closely connected with his fate, when Lord Wenlock arrived, attended by his son Harcourt, the sole object of his visit.

Lord Wenlock was a soldier; proud, wealthy, and ambitious: the finer feelings of the soul he had never cultivated, and as he established himself as the model from whence his son was to form his principles and conduct, the branches partook strongly of the root, and added to its essence many qualities solely of its own acquiring.

To the haughty pride of conscious superiority, he annexed an impetuous temper that ill brooked the smallest restraint, and to his ambitious inclina-

tions, that ſelf ſufficiency, which at all times led him to fancy the moſt daring projects, not ſuperior to his powers of performance.

Like his father, he had ſhared the toils and glories of war, nor had he been unſucceſsful in gleaning the laurels of fame, as in many of the conflicts on the Scotiſh borders, he had not only acquitted himſelf in ſuch a manner as to acquire the meed of univerſal applauſe, but alſo the more particular notice of his ſovereign.

This, with the concurring circumſtances of wealth and dignity (which at all times is too ſubject to create in the minds of their poſſeſſors, fancied perfections, almoſt realized by the

grovelling adulation of the ſlaviſh multitude) did not fail to operate on the naturally weak underſtanding of the haughty Harcourt, and totally pervert any ſeeds of moderation that lurked in the receſſes of his heart.

Such was the deſtined huſband of the timid Mary—of her, whoſe gentle ſpirits ſtartled at the ſlighteſt breath of paſſion, and ſhrunk from the boiſterous touch, as from the ſerpent's tongue; of her, whoſe mildneſs equalled the calm unruffled hour of ſober Eve, and whoſe heart throbbed with the pure affection of an early love.

As Albert quitted Lord de Mowbray to attend Sir Reginald, Mary was ſummoned to his preſence; with a trembling

a trembling ſtep ſhe obeyed the mandate, well knowing the purport of the converſation that was to enſue.

" Come near me Mary," he ſaid, as ſhe entered his chamber, " I would communicate to you a ſubject of importance;" then making a ſign for his attendants to retire, he thus continued—

" Tell me, my daughter, and ſpeak without reſerve, I aſk but the pure dictates of the heart, have I in aught been wanting to thy happineſs, or trifled with my child's tranquillity?"

" Oh, ſir!" replied Mary, as a tear of affection gathered to her eye, " why aſk that queſtion, when your own mind can give you the trueſt anſwer?"

"Becauſe from your own lips I would hear the avowal; but no more of that; I dare venture to ſay, you have been ſtill formoſt in my thoughts, and ſhall expect to meet a juſt return."

"What means my father! have I been wanting in my duty? that filial—"

"Stop Mary, nor plead excuſe before an accuſation: In filial fondneſs, and untainted duty, you have ever truly proved conſpicuous; but I look for more! perhaps a ſacrifice; but no! you will not deem it ſuch, when a parent's happineſs hangs on the performance!—Albert has informed you—it is my wiſh—'tis my command!—Lord Wenlock?"

"What greater rapture," cried Mary, "can my heart experience; than that which flows from the performance

formance of thy wiſhes?—Albert informed me of Lord Wenlock's wiſh for an alliance, and——"

"Yes!" replied de Mowbray, "and me of a daughter's diſobedience!—ſay, my child, did you refuſe to meet thy father's hopes, and ſeek to accelerate the haſtening grave?—I have no motive but thy welfare; the wiſh—ere death ſhall ſeal theſe eyes, to ſee thee fill that ſtate thy merits ſo amply deſerve."

"Ah, ſir!" exclaimed the trembling maid, as a tear rolled down her cheek, "'tis not the pomp and pride of wealth can give content;—no! let me ſtill partake thy fond parental care, and when the fatal hour of diſſolution comes, I can retire into a humble

ſtate, to ponder on, and bleſs thy memory in ſolitude!"

"Weak; — mean! — degenerate girl!" cried de Mowbray, in a furious and determined voice, "my earneſt wiſhes have then been laviſhed on an ungrateful——but no!—this, once, I'll uſe parental authority!—and bluſh at being its firſt victim!"

"Victim indeed!" anſwered Mary, half ſuffocated.

"Peace!" he exclaimed, turning an indignant eye on her, as the tears in ſilence rolled down her glowing face, "hence to thy chamber! Lord Wenlock comes to day; prepare to meet him; remember 'tis a father's command, who looks for blind obedience!"

So

So ſaying, he pointed to the door, and ſhe gladly haſtened to her own apartment, in order to indulge that grief which almoſt burſt her boſom;—in ſolitude, ſhe no longer reſtrained the ſwelling impulſe, but giving free vent to her tears, exclaimed in an agony—

"Juſt Providence! do I merit this fiery trial of my conſtancy? why am I placed between the dreadful alternatives of endleſs miſery, or a father's angry curſe?—I cannot pauſe upon the future! the lowring proſpect blackens with deſpair, and drives me almoſt to madneſs! oh! Albert—Albert!——"

At theſe words, ſhe threw herſelf on the bed ſuffocated with ſorrow, while

while the buſtle of Lord Wenlock's arrival, as it ſtruck on her ear, ſounded as the paſſing bell to her happineſs.

As Mary quitted her father, his indignant ſpirit ſubſided, and parental affection reaſſumed its ſway over his ſoul. Naturally fond of his children, he felt ſeverely any neceſſity that called for the voice of authority, but alſo of an ambitious and avaricious temper, his propenſities moſt commonly triumphed over nature, and induced him, as in the preſent caſe, where the brilliancy and ſplendour of the propoſal dazzled his imagination, to exert that prerogative his parental ſituation allowed him.

For

For a time he wavered between the tender impulſe of love, and the ſeductive call of pomp; at length the latter triumphed, and he had formed his final reſolution, when Lord Wenlock was announced.

They had been in habits of intimacy in their juvenile days, and ſought to continue it by a union of their families.

"It is," ſaid Lord Wenlock, "what I ardently deſire, and am the more pleaſed, as it meets with the entire concurrence of my ſon."

"I wiſh my friend," anſwered de Mowbray, "that I could return his preference with that alacrity he merits."

"How!" ſaid Harcourt, ill concealing offended pride under the maſk of

of diſappointed love, "does the lovely Mary treat my ſuit with ſcorn, and reject the alliance?"

"She does not *abſolutely* reject," anſwered de Mowbray, "but does not meet my wiſhes with that prompt obedience I looked for; however, attribute it to female weakneſs, and a thouſand other nameleſs cauſes we cannot decide on, becauſe unable to inveſtigate them."

Harcourt was ſilent, but not ſatiſfied, and after a ſlight refreſhment Lord Wenlock, whoſe buſineſs called him from the caſtle, departed, leaving his ſon to obtain conſent from the timid Mary.

Her

Her manners were of that nature, as to leave on the ſuſceptible mind from frequency of obſervation, an indelible remembrance, while Jane's more dazzling charms, were bowed to in momentary adoration, but ſoon forgotten.

Harcourt ſaw, and acknowledged her ſuperiority, but ſoon, tho' not bleſſed with the moſt tender heart, found the more potent influence of her ſiſter's modeſt beauties, and ſighed for the poſſeſſion of the mildly beaming gem.

Pride was his reigning principle, that inſulted turned to an Ethiop's hue the faireſt face, and blaſted the nobleſt character; confident of perſonal merit,

and

and reſiſtleſs powers, he was con-
founded at de Mowbray's words
where he expected a rapturous con-
ceſſion, and felt a riſing indignatio
againſt the trembling Mary flaſh acro
his mind.

He would have ſought Sir Reginald
to have poured his thoughts into hi
boſom, but hearing that he was abſen
he waited with the utmoſt impatienc
for his return, which happening ſhort
after midnight, and when it was im-
poſſible to communicate with him
after the firſt compliments of meetin
were over, they ſeparated, in order t
ſeek their ſeveral chambers. Si
Reginald did not retire to his, bu
hurried to Lord de Mowbray, wit
whom he continued for a conſiderab
time

time, ſaying as he quitted the apartment—

"Ere this 'tis done, and we may ſleep in peace!"

Lady Jane, diſappointed, and (as ſhe conceived) inſulted by the low-born Albert, felt her boſom agitated with the double torment of hatred to him, and a jealous wiſh for revenge againſt her unoffending ſiſter, whoſe modeſt merits dimmed the luſtre of her charms.

All ſcions ſhooting from the ſame ſtem, do not partake of ſimilar qualities; this was evident in the daughters of de Mowbray.

Jane

Jane was haughty, imperious, and proud: Mary mild, unaſſuming, and humble: the one was elate with external charms, the other of mental accompliſhments, yet, till this moment, a tender reciprocity of ſiſterly affection had ſubſiſted between them; when Jane, the ſlave of vanity, now doubly wounded by Albert's love, and Harcourt's preference, looked with a jealous eye on her ſhe deemed her rival; and determined to leave no plan unpractiſed, which might reſtore the triumph to her charms, and ſnatch from her the proffered hand, ſhe fancied ſhe would ſo gladly accept.

There was another motive, not leſs ſtrong, which impelled her to this laſt attempt; eager to meet the public eye,

eye, and gain that admiration her charms would not fail to acquire in the bright circle of a court, ſhe pined in ſolitude, and longed for the moment, when emerging from retirement, ſhe might enjoy thoſe delights her youthful fancy dreſſed in the brighteſt colours of fairy imagery. Wenlock was rich, and vain; proud of pomp, and ſurrounded with a pageantry little ſhort of royal; in him, then ſhe ſaw the perſon beſt adapted to place her in the ſphere ſhe longed to occupy, and determined to ſpare no pains which might alienate his affection from her ſiſter, and compleat the darling object of her ambitious views.

Filled with theſe ideas, ſhe threw herſelf on a reſtleſs bed, and the ſun

ſhot his roſy beams on her uncloſed lids: at the dawn ſhe aroſe, and reſolving that not a moment ſhould elapſe before her operations ſhould commence, ſhe ſought her brother, Sir Reginald, with an intent of intereſting him in her favour, well knowing the influence he had over the mind of Harcourt.

She made known her wiſhes to him, concealing their real motive, and giving them the air of ſmothered affection, and unregarded love; he was deceived, and inſtantly, with a ſympathetic feeling, promiſed his utmoſt aid to ſhake the attachment of Wenlock's ſon.

Sir

Sir Reginald, poſſeſſed the foibles of his father, he was equally ambitious and more avaricious: had Jane therefore conveyed her ideas to him, under any—nay, even their true form, he would as readily have adopted them.

His ſiſters depended for portions, and ſubſiſtance from the produce of his eſtate; here was a ſplendid offer which obviated in part that neceſſity, and was the more ſtrenuouſly followed up by him.

At Jane's propoſal, he inwardly rejoiced, as he now ſaw (not doubting his influence over Harcourt) a certainty of the wiſhed for union taking place; while Mary refuſed and was averſe, he could not look on it as ſure,

but now in the open avowal of Jane, his doubts vaniſhed, and his intereſted views were ſatisfied.

Impreſſed with theſe ideas, which as ſhe ſpoke inſtantly ruſhed on his mind, he readily promiſed his concurrence, and as ſhe departed, was preparing to ſeek Harcourt, who prevented him by entering the chamber, being no leſs anxious than himſelf, to unburden his overcharged heart; he had paſſed a reſtleſs night, and had early riſen to ſeek Sir Reginald.

That Mary ſhould refuſe what numbers would be rejoiced with, and think themſelves honoured in the propoſal, was what ill accorded with his ſelf important reflections, and haughty

ſpirit;

ſpirit; at times (as his thoughts ſwelled with indignity at the fancied inſult) he determined to quit the caſtle in diſguſt, and reſent the injury to his pride; but again he reflected that it would be more humbled in his abandoning the object of his purſuit, than any revenge could compenſate for, and determined, after a haſty deliberation, to fix his reſolutions by the advice of Reginald, whom he now joined as Jane retired.

"You are early up, my friend," he ſaid, "and fortunate in your meetings."

"How do you mean, Harcourt?"

"In the fair—I am ſeldom their companion even in thought."

"You wrong yourſelf, or I have been much deceived."

"Can you ſay ſo, and not be ignorant of the cauſe which prompts the idea?—your ſiſter Mary——"

"Stop, Harcourt, I know it, and bluſh at her unworthineſs!—but perhaps I may heal all;—let us retire from this, the domeſtics are employed in the ſeveral chambers, and I have a communication fit alone for privacy."

So ſaying, he led the way to the poſtern gate, but as he was preparing to paſs thro' it, he perceived a ſervant at a diſtance, whom he inſtantly joined, and after converſing a conſiderable time in a low voice, he exclaimed—

"What!—not yet come?"

"No, ſir."

"That's ſtrange!—ſhould he not arrive by twelve—ſaddle me a horſe, and be ready with your fellows; I'll ſeek him myſelf."

With theſe words he returned to Harcourt, and iſſuing into the park, they traverſed it to the grove, where after having apologized for his rude deſertion of him, he proceeded to open the ſubject his ſiſter had enjoined him.

"My friend," he ſaid, "the ignoble ſpirit of my ſiſter Mary, and her conſequent actions, are not unknown to me; it were unworthy of you to ſtoop for a weak girl's love; I am her brother, and feel a brother's warmth!

but I am your friend, a title that ſuperſedes all others!"

"That is one conſolation," replied Harcourt, "to my wounded pride."

"Believe me," continued Sir Reginald, "your pride has met no inſult, on the other hand, it is gratified; I have the means to end all conflicts—forget her!"

"And is this the remedy?—it adds a deeper ſtain!—Reginald, act more the boaſted friend, or——"

"Harcourt, you are too warm and prompt;—yes, I repeat my words—forget her!—ſcorn her!"

"And let her boaſt ſhe triumphed over Wenlock!—Reginald, you know me not!"

"Nor do you know me, if you for a moment conceive me capable of the thought;

thought; I ſhould then indeed be unworthy of your friendſhip, rather than that ſtill perſevere, and force her to compliance, if your mind is reſolute, and you can be proof to a ſighing maid!"

"*A ſighing maid?*—explain, I do not clearly comprehend!"

"Again I repeat it—ſcorn her, and take another!"

"Another!—where?—whom?"

"To be plain then—her ſiſter."

"What! the Lady Jane?—Reginald, you rave!—I have ſcarce ſpoken to, or——"

"Pſha! are the tender feelings of a maid never warmed by love?—no partialities—

"You jeſt, and find a pleaſure to play on me!"

"In

"In ſober ſadneſs I do not; a ſpruce young Knight cannot mingle with the women without fixing a ſhaft ſome where; I tell you Jane loves you, and believe me 'tis not a deſpicaple conqueſt, ſhe has a ſpirit that will not always ſtoop."

"How know you this?"

"How—why from her own ruby lips, which in trembling accents, with cheeks ſuffuſed in bluſhes, confided to a brother's breaſt her paſſion, and bound him to eternal ſecrecy; lamenting with a tear the hapleſs fate that deſtroyed her hopes in beſtowing you on a ſiſter:—this morning——"

"This morning did you ſay? nay, I do remember as ſhe flew paſt me in the gallery, her face was crimſoned, and her manner confuſed."

"Now,

"Now, confeſs Harcourt, I have been able to reconcile all points?—if you meet Jane's wiſhes, the thoughtleſs Mary is humbled, and too late will ſhe curſe that folly which bade her tamper with a lover's pride—and you——"

"Reginald, enough—I am reſolved, this hour transfers my affections to her more deſerving ſiſter; let us not delay, I am impatient to read the recantation of my love, and own my blindneſs!"

So ſaying, he proceeded to the caſtle, and Reginald followed him, amply ſatisfied with the conduct of his eaſy convert, reſolving to expedite the concluſion of what he ſo ardently deſired.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

MARY's ſlumbers were not more tranquil than thoſe of her ambitious ſiſter, but they were diſturbed from a different motive; the one ſought to elevate herſelf into notice, the other how to avoid that ſplendour which courted her acceptance, feeling that

her heart accorded not with the blaze of pomp and *littleneſs* of vanity; ſhe wiſhed only to enjoy her preſent tranquillity, which from her ſituation was above dependence, yet beneath that public notice the wealth of Wenlock could beſtow, and the proud ſpirit of Jane panted to enter on.

Added to this, her boſom throbbed with a pure, tho' hopeleſs paſſion, for the orphan Albert, which his dependent ſtate ſeemed to render for ever vain, yet did ſhe prefer the pleaſure of indulging that love in contemplation, which her union with Harcourt would have rendered criminal.

To avoid therefore, and if poſſible protract the final termination of her happineſs

happineſs (for from the moment that made her Wenlock's, did ſhe date its concluſion) and at the ſame time to continue a parent's affection, was the object of her reſtleſs thoughts; a thouſand plans were formed and rejected; formed in the ſchool of implicit obedience (till this trying circumſtance) her heart had never permitted an inclination contradictory to her father's will; but here, where her own felicity was ſo materially concerned, ſhe found a ſomething like nature prompt her—if ſhe would not abſolutely refuſe, at leaſt to reſiſt the completion of her miſery.

At intervals ſhe thought of flying from the caſtle, but the idea of a friendleſs outcaſt—the cold charity of an unfeeling world—the precarious

proſpects

prospects of a wretched female—the—in short, so many obstacles superior to her fortitude and strength, at once presented themselves, that with horror she turned from the gloomy view, for tho' she would have prefered death to the intended union, still she shrunk from it, when seen thro' the medium of lingering misery, and totally rejected the thought.

Her next idea was, to solicit the indulgent tenderness of her father, but this also appeared too hopeless to admit success: she knew his temper, and rejected the vision; tho' of a fond parental soul, still he had been accustomed to unlimited obedience, and a plan once formed was never rooted from his mind; this she was not ignorant

rant of, and turned from the fruitleſs wiſh with deſpair.

Her ſiſter's conduct with reſpect to Albert, baffled her hopes alſo from that quarter, and Sir Reginald, whoſe temper ill accorded with her's, had ſeldom ſhewn her a brother's love.

In this ſituation nothing appeared to ſoften her lot, and ſhe was compelled to reſolve ſubmiſſion, becoming the melancholy victim of ambition.

"But can Wenlock," ſhe cried, "take a divided heart, and force to the altar that reluctant maid that ne'er can love?—impoſſible!"

A dawn

A dawn of hope roſe to her imagination, and ſhe determined, tho' great as the exertion would be, to make known to him her ſituation, and ſolicit his generoſity; then, ſhould he perſevere, ſhe had nothing more to expect but compulſion on one hand, and a hard obedience from her aching boſom on the other.

Thus did ſhe paſs the ſolitary hours of night in painful reflection, and unceaſing tears, wiſhing for, yet dreading the returning dawn, as to her it appeared but accelerating the ſacrifice of her peace for ever, as ſhe was ignorant what unhoped for rapture it would produce, thro' the means of a ſiſter's ambitious jealouſy, a brother's narrow avarice, and a lover's offended pride.

De Mowbray himſelf, tho' determined, was not free from anxiety; well knowing the gentle and unoffending ſpirit of Mary, he could not help feeling a repugnance at violating her tranquillity, and often wiſhed that Jane had been the object of Wenlock's paſſion.

As ſoon as Sir Reginald and Harcourt had reached the caſtle, they haſtened into the ſaloon, and there diſcovered the object of their converſation ſeated on a ſofa, reclining her head upon her hand, and her face marked with the traces of melancholy. They were miſtaken; it was not ſorrow, but anxiety, that clouded her aſpect; from the window ſhe beheld them in earneſt converſation, and racked

racked by doubt for the completion of her plans, almoſt burſt into tears; the ſound of their ſteps in the gallery increaſed her agitation; ſhe would have ariſen to hide her confuſion, but the earneſt deſire to hear the ſequel of her hopes, ſurmounted the tranſient operation of modeſty, and induced her to await the interview.

"Here, Jane," ſaid Sir Reginald, as he led in Harcourt, "here is a youth, who has loved juſt long enough to find he has been miſtaken."

"Yes!" cried Wenlock, caſting himſelf at her feet, "I thus confeſs my blindneſs!—pardon, lovely Jane, thoſe recreant eyes, that could paſs o'er thy beauties; but thus I own my

madneſs!—may I hope?—and yet I dare not;—ah, ſpeak!"

Jane bluſhed, and trembled with pleaſure and confuſion, while he thus proceeded——

"You are ſilent—Alas! that more than marks my condemnation—and I am wretched!"

"Pſhaw!" cried Sir Reginald, "what a novice you are in love; do you not ſee that mantling crimſon—that downcaſt eye—that tremor—all ſpeak conſent?—there ſiſter, you may go—I have anſwered for you, and we will ſpare your confuſion."

As he ſpoke, ſhe ſtretched out her hand to Harcourt, and as he preſſed

it to his lips with fervor and aroſe, ſhe ſighed, and inſtantly withdrew.

"My dear Reginald," he exclaimed, claſping him in his arms, "what do I not owe you?—I am reſtored to myſelf, and rendered the happieſt man that England boaſts!"

"Now confeſs," anſwered the Knight, "that my ſpecific has healed all wounds—and Mary——"

"Is forgotten!" cried Harcourt, to love ſhe is no more, and only remembered as the ſiſter of my Jane;—but thy father?"

"More doubts!" replied Sir Reginald, "theſe are the requiſite torments of love;—but in a word, his conſent is certain, and to render it more ſo, let us immediately acquaint

him with the change, and hear his opinion on it."

They accordingly haſtened to Lord de Mowbray's chamber, and arrived juſt as he had ſent a meſſenger for Mary, in order to prepare her for the firſt interview with Wenlock's ſon, ſhe having the preceding day abſented herſelf from company.

With equal ſurpriſe and pleaſure did he hear of Harcourt's preference, and readily accorded to his wiſhes, as it freed at once his breaſt from tumult, and obviated the neceſſity of parental force.

In the mean time the over-joyed Jane retired to her chamber, ſcarce able

able to conceal the rapturous emotions that agitated her boſom; ſhe ſaw her plans confirmed by ſucceſs, and the wiſhed for proſpect of ſplendour realized, while as ſhe caſt a glance on the bright mirror which reflected back her radient charms, a ſelf complacent monitor within, whiſpered to her heart that ſhe deſerved the elevated ſtation.

Pleaſed with the fond idea, every grace was added to by the hand of art, and the taſk of the toilet never performed with more judgement and alacrity: a conſcious ſuperiority blazed in her eye, and increaſed the native dignity of her manner, rendering her at once the dazzling beauty and unrivalled miſtreſs of Harcourt's heart, who, while he gazed with ecſtaſy on

thoſe melting charms he was ſo ſoon to poſſeſs, bleſſed the happy fates that gave him ſuch a prize.

De Mowbray hearing the ſtep of Mary in the gallery (who obedient to his commands was haſtening to the chamber) begged the abſence of the youths, and thus addreſſed her, as ſuffuſed in tears, and trembling with apprehenſion ſhe entered.

" Dry thoſe tears, my child, you now are miſtreſs of your own actions; Harcourt no longer ſolicits thy hand, but tranſfering his affections to thy ſiſter, courts our alliance thro' her, who not averſe to the union, freely meets my wiſhes: chaſe then this ſorrow, and baniſh melancholy from thy brow,

brow, being ſatisfied, my parental fond-neſs is unchanged."

So ſudden and unexpected a reverſe of ſituation, was too much for her tender ſpirits; it precluded ſpeech, permitted tears alone to eaſe her fwelling boſom, with which ſhe watered the hand of her father, as ſhe fervently preſſed it to her lips.

Shortly after Sir Reginald entering the chamber, Mary with a light heart retired: he remained ſome time with de Mowbray, in earneſt and private converſation, appearing as he left him, extremely agitated, and gave immediate orders for his horſe, exclaiming as he mounted at the caſtle gate.

" 'Twas

" 'Twas ſtrange! and ſhould be looked into."

Attended by two domeſtics, he was abſent ſeveral hours, at length returning weary and diſpirited, he informed his inquirers, that Albert and Hubert had been the cauſe of his fruitleſs ſearch, and apparent inquietude.

Then haſtening to de Mowbray, he continued ſome time with him, obſerving as he quitted the chamber—

" *That now they knew not whom to truſt.*"

The extraordinary diſappearance of Albert and Hubert, did not fail to excite ſurmiſes among the inhabitants of the caſtle, but theſe were drowned in

the buſtle of preparation for the approaching nuptials, which were expedited as faſt as poſſible: de Mowbray fearing the approach of death, as he ſtill continued languid, and wiſhing to behold the ſettlement of his daughter before that awful event, together with the impatience of the youthful Harcourt, was the cauſe of the ſudden union which was protracted but for three days.

Lord Wenlock receiving information of the ſettlement, haſtened to approve his ſon's choice,' and nothing but feſtivity ſmiled thro' the manſion, abſorbing in its facinating ſnare every other reflection: Albert was forgotten, and Hubert no more remembered in

the

the intoxicating gaiety, and wild hilarity of the moment.

The gentle Mary alone ſeemed to retain the recollection that ſuch perſons aught to have ſhared their joy, and was the only face in the caſtle that was clouded with melancloly; however, her deſpondency was alſo unnoticed in the general mirth, and her ſighs drowned by the loud laugh of feſtivity.

In ſecret ſhe indulged the freedom of ſorrow, and unreſtrained by the prying eye of inquiſitive curioſity, gave free ſcope to thoſe anxious feelings the abſence of Albert created.

De

De Mowbray felt his ſtrength renovated at the approaching compleation of his wiſhes, and with Lord Wenlock was determined that pomp, and ſplendour ſhould aſſume their faireſt aſpects to grace the jocund moment of promiſed bliſs, under their united pride and profuſion.

Sir Reginald in ſecret enjoyed the perfection of his views, and Harcourt, with all the ardent expectation of impetuous youth, curſed the tedious moments that protracted his felicity, and looked forward with rapture to the third circling ſun, which was to give the bluſhing Jane to his longing arms.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ALBERT, with his bold companions, having emerged from the ſolitary cavern, and ſlowly advanced into the gloomy foreſt, began to communicate to each other the concurring circumſtances that cauſed them to meet, in which the unknown warrior informed

them, that with his companions, the partakers of his toils and fortune (being but a ſhort time in England) he had, in compliance to a deceaſed friend's wiſh, viſited Mawbray caſtle, in order to convey intelligence of moment to its Lord, but found it deſerted and in ruins; he then proceeded to relate the ſcene Albert had already witneſſed, who informed him on that head, and continuing to their meeting in the lonely habitation of the robbers, thus added—

"And now, ſir, having eſcaped from almoſt certain ruin, I truſt my ſteps are directed to more fortunate retreats, in the hoſpitable aſylum of Bertram Caſtle."

"Bertram Caſtle!" exclaimed the unknown "we are then indeed luckily met,

met, as thither do I alſo propoſe to journey."

"But ſhall not journey long," cried Hubert, who as the dawn aroſe, caſt his eyes anxiouſly around, in order to recognize their ſituation, "on the oppoſite ſide of yonder hill ſtands the place of deſtination; many a time have I paſſed it by, but ſeldom was ſo glad to draw near it as now; for the truth is, had our road been much longer, I ſhould have taken my laſt nap under a tree, for what between age, cold, and fatigue, I am ſcarcely fit to reach the fire ſide as it is."

"Hold up thy courage, Hubert," replied Albert, "the way to comfort moſt commonly lies thro' difficulty."

"It muſt," anſwered the old man, "be indeed ſomething of extraordi-

nary

nary quality, that will at another time give ſo much activity to my joints as to lead them ſuch a road, for nothing leſs than the fear of death laſt night could have afforded them the vigour they exhibited; but come, let us croſs the hill, and then for a little reſt."

They accordingly began to aſcend the eminence, and from its ſummit diſcovered the hoſpitable towers of Bertram Caſtle, ſituated in the midſt of a luxurious grove, which ſwept from the middle of the mount to the oppoſite ſide of an extenſive valley, thickly planted, and watered by the ſilver waves of a ſtream that wound in various meanders thro' its boſom, now hid by the thick foilage of the budding

ſpring, and now gleaming thro' the open ſpaces of the foreſt.

The ſcene was grand and ſublime, ornamented with the bluſhing beams of the riſing ſun ſlowly advancing its orb above the horizon, and darting a a temperate glow thro' the chill air, while the vivid green burſting thro' the hoar froſt, gave a pleaſing drapery to the ſurrounding proſpect.

As the ſtranger contemplated the ſcene before him, and caſt his eyes on the towers of the caſtle, it ſeemed to recall to his labouring boſom the recollection of paſt misfortunes, and as he pondered on them with marked attention, exclaimed—

"Alas!

"Alas! what a ſtrange circle has revolved ſince laſt I trod theſe ſcenes; how chequered with viciſſitude of joy and ſorrow; but come, let us proceed, the hoſpitable maſter of yon manſion was once my friend; he then was much unlike the world; perhaps he ſtill is virtuous, if ſo—we yet may hope a welcome."

"My life upon his merit!" cried Albert, with animation, "but I fancy we are too early for its inhabitants, and may here contemplate the unfolding beauties of nature yet awhile."

"Not ſo faſt, maſter Albert," anſwered Hubert.

"Albert!" exclaimed the ſtranger, "the friend of Sir Bertram;—perhaps—nay 'tis—may I preſume, perhaps Lord de Mowbray?"

The youth ſtarted at the queſtion, remembering the words of Hubert, and was at a loſs how to reply, when the unknown continued—

" Pardon my abrupt demand—but one whoſe merits ſit near my heart enjoined—yes, with his dying words, requeſted——"

" Look!" cried Hubert, interrupting him, " at Bertram Caſtle they are no ſluggards; the ſmoke already mounts from its chimnies to tell us we may enter; beſides the road is not ſo ſhort as it ſeems to be—forward we cannot proceed as immediately beneath us runs a craggy precipice, down which we cannot deſcend, and muſt of conſequence turn to the right, where lies a path directly to the houſe; let me lead you, there is not a turning I

am ignorant of, and the proſpect of breakfaſt has almoſt the ſame effect as terror had laſt night, in giving activity to my frozen limbs."

This interruption ſtopped the interrogations of the ſtranger, and in ſilence they followed the old man, who evinced his knowledge of the place by conducting them to the caſtle gates.

The domeſtics were employed about their ſeveral avocations, and on ſeeing a band of armed ſtrangers at that unuſual hour, aſſembled to demand the cauſe of their viſit, of which being informed, according to the hoſpitality of the manſion, they were (tho' the Lord of the caſtle was yet locked in ſlumber) conducted into an apartment,

and ſerved with thoſe refreſhments which the early period of the day afforded.

The firſt perſon that met Albert's view, was his faithful defender, Gondibert, who could ſcarce credit his eyes on beholding him, but at length being convinced of his identity, he exclaimed—

"St. Thomas preſerve us!—is it indeed you maſter Albert?—to what cauſe is my Lord Sir Bertram indebted for this viſit?"

"Do you not ſee my honeſt fellow," ſaid Hubert, "that his words are almoſt froze in his mouth; if you want information they muſt be firſt thawed out."

"Hubert

"Hubert is right, good Gondibert," anſwered Albert, "after a little repoſe I will explain all, and your queſtion ſhall be fully anſwered."

To the other merits and foibles of his ſtation, Gondibert added that of an unconquerable curioſity, now much excited by the unexpected appearance of Albert: a curioſity which could alone be gratified from his own mouth, and as his buſineſs totally regarded Sir Bertram, he was convinced that it would be fully opened to no one elſe, and leſs than the entire knowledge would only add to the edge of his appetite.

To compaſs therefore the ſatisfaction of his wiſhes, he determined to

diſturb his maſter, and accordingly proceeded to his chamber door, before which he walked with a conſiderable noiſe, coughed, and ſung aloud, in the hopes of exciting his attention, and rather provoking his anger than not compleating his point.

Finding every effort vain, he at laſt reſolved to uncloſe the door, and boldly enter the chamber; this had the deſired effect; Sir Bertram rouſed from his ſlumber, demanded "who was there?"

When Gondibert, rejoiced at the ſucceſs of his ſcheme, immediately anſwered—

"'Tis I, ſir—your 'ſquire."

"And,

"And what cauſe of ſuch moment leads you here at this hour?"

"The cauſe is not much, ſir, only the caſtle is filled with ſtrangers; there are five of them;—not all ſtrangers neither, as maſter Albert is among them."

"Albert! did you ſay, Gondibert?"

"Yes, ſir, he that *we* ſaved from the——"

"I know the perſon you mean;—leave me.—I will ſee him immediately;—there, go."

Gondibert inſtantly departed, and now, as he ſaw a proſpect of ſucceſs, reſolved to collect as much as poſſible before the feaſt began, and accordingly ſeeking the apartment where the ſtrangers

ſtrangers were ſeated, he thus addreſſed Albert—

"A ſharp action that we had the other day, ſir—I have ſeldom been ſo much put too."

With ſafety he might aſſert it, as courage in exceſs was not one of his greateſt foibles; he had been a ſervant in the family for many years, and by fidelity ſtill retained his ſituation;—long ſervice had given him a licenſed familiarity beyond the other domeſtics, and Sir Bertram retained him in the office of 'ſquire, more as an honourable reward, than from any expectations of his valour, well knowing that tho' he loved his intereſts, he would rather ſhew his attachment to them by any other proof than the ſword.

ſword. In their fortunate meeting at Mowbray Caſtle, Albert was not long in diſcovering the extent of Gondibert's proweſs, and now was determined not to rob him of thoſe laurels he had ſo juſt a claim to wear.

"Yes," he replied, "they were reſolute and daring ruffians."

"But were compelled to fly before our courage!"

"That, Gondibert, and the aſſiſtance of the better cauſe, was too powerful for their force."

"Little did I think, ſir, in ſo ſhort a period, to have been enabled, at Bertram Caſtle, to congratulate you a ſecond time on our victory;—may I aſk the cauſe of this viſit?"

Albert

Albert was ſilent, and Hubert, who was totally ignorant of the ſquire's character, not yielding ſo eaſily to what he deemed his prying and impertinent curioſity, rather roughly replied,

"That, ſir, doubtleſs he will explain when your maſter aſks it; the buſineſs is his."

Gondibert, who at times did not want for penetration, immediately anſwered—

"Pardon my unguarded queſtion," and retired.

Scarce had he quitted the chamber, when Sir Bertram entered, anxious to know what cauſe had induced Albert to ſeek the protection of his caſtle; reſolving at the ſame time to afford it

to

to him in its moſt extended manner, ſhould uncourted misfortune, or unoffending error, have compelled him to it.

Having claſped him to his boſom, and regardleſs of the other ſtrangers, demanded the motive of his viſit.

Albert anſwered, "of that, ſir, I am myſelf ignorant; to this old man I muſt refer you."

"And I," continued Hubert, "will amply ſatisfy you on that head, but at this moment muſt beg your indulgence, which I dare ſay you will the more readily grant, when I aſſure you, that neither maſter Albert, nor myſelf, have cloſed an eye the laſt night."

"How!"

"How!" cried Sir Bertram, "that's ſtrange!"

"But true, ſir," anſwered Hubert, "watching the walls of an old caſtle, does not induce a man to ſleep, and the quagmires of a dreary moor is but a bad bed of a froſty night; ſo that you may ſee, ſir, I ſhould make but a lame narrator to ſatisfy curioſity."

Sir Bertram immediately reſtrained his impatience, and giving orders to prepare chambers for his weary gueſts, courteouſly advanced to the three armed ſtrangers, demanding by what chance he was rendered ſo happy as to poſſeſs their company?

"By more," replied the unknown, "than the moment will permit me to relate;

relate; for like my old friend, I too muſt beg repoſe; but ere you grant it, know on whom 'tis laviſhed."

So ſaying, he raiſed the beaver of his helmet, and preſented to Sir Bertram a face that ſeemed not totally unknown, but on which he gazed with the vacant ſtare of attempted recollection: the ſtranger obſerving his want of knowledge, took his hand and with a ſigh, added—

"Have twenty years, and the world's ſtrange viciſſitudes ſo dimed the traces of this aſpect, that Bertram can no more remember his ruined friend de Clifford?"

"De Clifford!" exclaimed the Knight, ruſhing forward, and claſping him to his boſom, "is it poſſible! do

I indeed behold my friend?—dead, and reſtored!—but I ſee that you are too much fatigued at preſent to ſatisfy my unbounded curioſity, I therefore will curb my anxiety, till a ſhort ſlumber ſhall reſtore you to a ſufficiency of ſtrength; in the mean time uſe as your own the poor means I can afford you."

So ſaying, he ordered Gondibert, whoſe eager ear was applied to the door, in order to catch the converſation, to get more chambers ready, which being done, his friends retired, and ſoon forgot their cares in the ſoft embrace of a grateful ſleep.

On the death of William the Conqueror, his ſon, William Rufus, ſucceeded

ceeded to the Britiſh throne, in excluſion of his more valuable brother, Robert Duke of Normandy, thro' the eccleſiaſtical influence of Lanfranc the primate, of whoſe protection he was entruſted by a recommendatory letter from the deceaſed monarch.

But this violation of primogeniture, was not tamely ſubmitted to by the haughty Barons of England, and their authority already made the fraudulent crown tremble on the brows of William.

Robert, from his many virtues, and (what was perhaps more eſteemed in thoſe early days of bold atchievements) his determined bravery, had gained the hearts, and excited the commiſe-

ration of his partiſans, at the ſame time that they determined to place him on that throne, William's addreſs, and Lanfranc's influence had deprived him of.

Odo, Biſhop of Baieux, and Robert, Earl of Mortaigne, maternal brothers to the victorious Norman, who eſtabliſhed the Empire in England, ſtruck with envy at the primate's increaſing power, now rendered more permanent from the recent ſervice he had rendered the King, reſolved to ruin him, and dethrone the minor of his authority.

A conſpiracy was formed, in which the unfortunate de Clifford bore a part, in conjunction with many others, of equal and more extenſive authority; Euſtace,

Euſtace, Count of Bologne; Roger, Earl of Shrewſbury; and Arundel; Robert de Beleſme; Roger Bigod and others, formed the chain of this powerful confederacy.

They flew to arms, their vaſſals were ſummoned, and their caſtles fortified, but in vain; the politic William, in the moment of danger, had recourſe to thoſe who had oppoſed under the uſurper Harold, the conqueſt of his father: he gained the affections of the native Engliſh, by a promiſe of mitigation of Norman ſeverity, who rallying round his ſtandard, ſoon put him in a ſituation to take the field, and maintain by force his title to the crown.

The fortreſſes of the rebels were reduced, and themſelves compelled to ſeek ſafety by flight or by ſubmiſſion: a few received a pardon, but the greater part were attainted, and doomed by the ſentence, with the dread of puniſhment to perpetual baniſhment, and their eſtates beſtowed on thoſe who had remained faithful to the intereſts of William.

Among the latter was de Clifford, the friend of Sir Bertram; to his caſtle he flew for a temporary ſhelter from perſecution, but being cloſely purſued, withdrew himſelf ſoon after he heard that his rich domains had been beſtowed, as the reward of fidelity, on the proud Norman Baron, William de Warenne.

Finding

Finding all hopes of pardon, or farther ſafety in England impoſſible, he privately retired from Sir Bertram's protection, and from that hour to the moment in which he diſcovered himſelf to his valued friend, had not been heard of.

CHAP. IV.

WITH extreme impatience did Sir Bertram await the explanation of what to him appeared so much involved in perplexity; the extraordinary visit of de Clifford, and yet more mysterious one of Albert, whose reasons were unknown to himself.

Not

Not long did he remain in ſuſpenſe with reſpect to the latter, as Hubert, no leſs eager to communicate than the Knight to hear, ſoon aroſe and made known to Sir Bertram, the cauſe that impelled him to fly the protection of de Mowbray, and led away the unconſcious youth, ſaying, as he concluded the more material parts of his narration—

"Much, ſir, is yet untold; but this will ſuffice to ſhew you, that not without ſound reaſon have we fled from Lord de Mowbray; the remainder I reſerve for the important moment which muſt elucidate the myſterious fate of Albert, unknown to all but thoſe whoſe machinations were moſt active to undo him."

"What you tell me is ſtrange, but not unthought of,—that de Mowbray ſhould—but no matter—to inveſtigate cauſes when the ill is done, but ſhews a fruitleſs toil;—we muſt act in this emergency, not ſit to ponder:—from the firſt moment I ſaw Albert, a ſomething more than common prepoſſeſſion, gave him my favour:—at de Mowbray's he never met my eye; but when in the lone ruin he fled from his aſſaſſins, methought I ſaw his father ſtand before me—and this——

Shewing Hubert the picture of his ſiſter Gertrude—

"This confirmed the idea."

At

At ſight of the reſemblance, the old man ſtarted back with horror, and for ſome time could not recover himſelf ſufficiently to ſpeak; at length he exclaimed—

"Hide it!—it blaſts my aching ſight!——Oh! Sir Bertram, I could a tale unfold, ſo full of dreadful import!—but now ſpare my weak age—another time—I am guilty, but not the hardened villain!—yet I may live to make ſome reparation;—but ſure not equal to the dark enormity that clouds my ſoul!"

"Be candid and ſincere," replied the Knight, "and hope the beſt:—the hour of juſtice—of ample retribution, is not far diſtant, till then be ſilent."

He

He would have proceeded, when the entrance of de Clifford and his friends, with ſhortly after Albert, prevented him, and Hubert retired to the care of Gondibert, who now finding himſelf more on an equality with his companion than he at firſt imagined, did not heſitate once more to vent his curioſity in repeated queſtions, but obtained nothing but evaſive anſwers from the wary domeſtic.

"'Tis many a weary hour," ſaid de Clifford, "ſince laſt I was an inmate of this caſtle, and the changes of my life, as rapid as ſtrange: misfortune's hand has never taken its preſſure from my heart, and but for the kind and ſupporting conſolation of friendſhip, this weary frame would ne'er have

have wintered out Twenty long years of miſery."

"Your words," ſaid Sir Bertram, "ſerve but to increaſe that curioſity your unexpected preſence has already excited."

"It ſhall be gratified," returned de Clifford; upon which the Knight ordering in refreſhments, and informing Albert that he was ſatisfied on the reaſons which led him from de Mowbray, reaſons that ſoon ſhould be explained to him, they finiſhed a ſlight repaſt, and as a ſtruggling ſigh burſt from his boſom, the melancholy exile thus began—

"The cauſe of my misfortunes," he ſaid, addreſſing the Knight, "are too well known to you to need a recapitulation; tho' twenty years have rolled

rolled paſt, ſtill cannot the recollection be effaced from your memory; on mine it is imprinted by the indelible hand of ſad and painful certainty—

"Let me then commence from that melancholy night, on which the purſuers of my hapleſs fate, compelled me to abandon thy protecting roof, and caſt myſelf on the unfeeling world, abandoned, and outcaſt from ſociety.

"Loud blew the bleak winds, and the dim moon ſcarce lent a feeble ray to light my wayward journey, as turning my horſe into the trackleſs foreſt, I hoped in its obſcurity to eſcape the keen vigilance of obſervation: all night I travelled thro' the gloom unnoticed, and ſcarcely known even to myſelf; as wrapped in the moſt profound melancholy, I permitted my ſteed to

chuſe that ſecurity its maſter was unable to direct to, and hardly perceived the riſing morn, until the calls of nature, and the proſpect of a diſtant village broke the thread of painful thought, and while *they* prompted to ſeek relief, prudence called out beware!

"Afraid of obſervation, and the danger of falling unguardedly into the hands of my enemies, I turned from the habitations of man, and once more plunged into the trackleſs wilds until mid-day, when no longer able to bear the preſſure of hunger and fatigue, I ventured to a ſmall cottage ſituated in a woody glen, and ſolicited the moſt humble refreſhment.

"They inſtantly, with that liberality which ſhould, but ſeldom does, attend on pomp, granted my demand, and placing

placing a table at the door near to a ſod ſeat, covered it with the beſt their lowly cot could afford.

"'Tis but coarſe," ſaid the venerable and benevolent old man that attended me, "but yet it is the fineſt we can produce, and a hearty welcome muſt make up for the deficiency."

"I thanked his goodneſs, and raiſing my beaver was preparing to eat, when a perſon whom I had obſerved carefully concealed in a long cloak, inſtantly ſtarted from his ſeat, and waving me to follow him, retired into a wood that ran along the ſide of the eminence.

"At firſt I heſitated; but reflecting that he was alone, not conſidering the danger of an ambuſh, I obeyed his ſignal, and purſued him into the grove.

"After

"After we had proceeded far enough to eſcape obſervation, my unknown conductor turned round, and throwing back his concealment, preſented to my aſtoniſhed eyes, Beleſme, who, with many others, you may remember, fled to avoid the triumphant vengeance of William.

"Well met! de Clifford," he exclaimed, "you are juſt arrived in time to ſhare the aſylum and ruined fortunes of our brave confederates; not far hence they are aſſembled, uncertain yet what ſteps to purſue that may ſcreen them from detection: I had but juſt emerged from our ſolitude, in order to collect, if poſſible, the rumours of the day, that from them our actions might be modelled."

"We

"We are loſt," I anſwered, "beyond the hopes of ſafety!—you ſee me here uncertain of the air I draw, and panting from a haſty flight, we muſt be prompt or periſh!"

"Return then," he continued, "to the cottage—delays are dangerous;—within two hours meet me here, and join our band;—ſomething muſt be done, and that deciſive;—but beware, all eyes are open to obſerve, all ears to catch the echo of our names;—ſteer wide of ruin;—remember, in two hours—I wait you here."

"So ſaying, he retreated farther into the foreſt, and I returned to honour the hoſpitality of my kind hoſt.

"Having concluded my ſimple meal, and paſſed ſome time in converſation, I conjectured the preſcribed limits

limits of my time arrived, and mounting my horſe, with cordial thanks for my entertainer's liberality, I haſtily rode forward to the place of aſſignation, where I had not been long before de Beleſme appeared, who conducted me thro' a variety of intricate paſſages to the mouth of a cavern, ſo obſcured by the foreſt, that nothing but frequency of obſervation could have rendered it familiar to the eye.

"We entered it, and as I obſerved the wretched ſupporters of Robert's cauſe, reduced to this melancholy ſubterfuge of ſafety, a tear involuntarily ſtarted to my eye; however, it was a fruitleſs ſorrow—I was reduced to the ſame level, and in the moment of recollection, I could not help ſmiling

at my being ſo profuſe of compaſſion, when ſo truly the object of it myſelf.

" As I joined them, they had determined to retire as ſecretly as poſſible from England, and flying into Normandy, not doubting but Robert, in whoſe cauſe they had fallen, would ſupport, and reſcue them from danger.

" The idea was juſt, and had the generous Duke poſſeſſed the power, he would have perfected it; but my information immediately changed the reſolution, when I informed them—

" That the ambitious William, not content with the acquiſition of a kingdom, in conſequence of the diſturbances the failure of Robert's attempt on the crown had created in his territory, had reſolved to ſeize the opportunity of waging war againſt his brother,

brother, in hopes of annexing his Dukedom to the Empire he had already gained."

"This was an unforſeen obſtacle to their intention, placing an inſurmountable barrier to the only place of hoped-for ſafety, and as a life of indolence muſt enſure penury, and in England no aſylum affording ſecurity, it was reſolved to quit the country, and penetrating thro' Scotland to ſome ſea port town, to procure a veſſel, and direct our courſe to the eaſt, where a long and ſanguinary war had raged between the Turks, and Alexis Comnenus, Emperor of the Greeks.

"At leaſt we thought a grave might there be found, unpolluted with perſecution, and perhaps not diſhonoured."

"To Alexis, therefore, we already dedicated our ſwords, and only waited for the moment, when William, employed in his projected invaſion, or ſome inteſtine war, relaxing the ſeverity of purſuit, might afford us an opportunity of flying unobſerved for ever from the kingdom.

"In about three months, during which time we were inhabitants of the ſolitary cavern, and ſupported by the precarious ſports of the field—the wiſhed-for hour arrived; William invaded Normandy, and the fortreſſes of Albemarle and St. Valori, were delivered into his hands, by the treacherous Barons Walter and Odo, thro' the influence of the monarch's gold; this we heard before our departure, being unavoidably detained for

for ſome time longer, in order to procure money adequate to the undertaking we projected: this was obtained at intervals by my wretched companions, from their friends, as they ſtole from the cavern unobſerved.

" For my part, I was totally dependant on their bounty: de Warenne poſſeſſed my eſtate, and the greater part of my relatives had joined the oppoſite cauſe, ſo that I could only partake their danger, not aſſiſt their undertaking.

" Having at length accompliſhed our object, as the ſun ſet in clouds of crimſon, and night's pale creſcent afforded a trembling light to direct our wayward ſteps, we bade adieu to the melancholy cavern, and at that

moment ſeemed to have taken a laſt farewell of England.

" Being near the boarders of Scotland thro' which our route lay, we haſtened thither, reſolving to continue under the protecting ſhade of the foreſt, in unobſerved ſecurity:—all night we journeyed; and the next day, to avoid notice, as our road paſſed over an expoſed plain) we reſted in the ſkirts of the foreſt, until evening once more caſt its ſhadowy mantle over us, when again we commenced our journey.

" Having traverſed the plain, as we were preparing to enter the grove, our ſteps were arreſted by a deep and hollow groan; it ſounded from no great diſtance—and at that moment forgetting our ſituation, each one ſprung forward to the quarter whence

the voice of diſtreſs proceeded, eager to afford aſſiſtance; a ſecond groan more deep and dreadful, pointed out the ſpot we ſought, where on the ground, apparently in the laſt convulſive ſtruggle of parting life, lay a youth, covered with wounds, and bathed in his own blood.

"Some faint ſparks of exiſtence ſtill remaining, we raiſed him from the ground, and placing him upon my horſe, I mounted alſo, and ſupporting him, we continued our road, paſſing the borders before the dawn, and carefully avoiding the ſlighteſt trace of habitation;—the foreſts alone were witneſs of our flight, and the proviſions we had brought from the cavern, ſlaked with the cold wave of the bubbling brook, our only ſuſtenance.

" When the ſecond day began to brighten from the eaſt, we again halted, and ſpreading our mantles for the wounded youth, forgot our own miſfortunes in the attention for his.

" On examining the hurts he had received, we diſcovered them to be numerous, tho' apparently not mortal, and bathing them with the only medicine our ſituation afforded, a helmet of water, bound them with a torn kerchief, and again proceeded as the chaſte morn gave ſignal of ſecurity.

" De Beleſme, who had frequently viſited Scotland, now undertook to be our guide, and evinced his knowledge of the taſk, by conducting us to a ſmall ſea port town, juſt as the opening day began to render nature viſible.

" We

"We did not enter it, being dubious of our ſafety, but lying among the rocks which were waſhed by the reſtleſs ocean, awaited the return of de Beleſme, who had boldly ventured into the town, in order, if poſſible, to procure a veſſel;—after a conſiderable time (to us not employed in the moſt pleaſing reflection, doubly tedious) he returned, and with an animated countenance, proclaimed ſucceſs.

"I have," he exclaimed, "performed the object of my miſſion;—by midnight, the bark that is to waft us to a foreign ſhore, will attend us off yon point—till then we muſt uſe caution."

"The ſituation we were in was an indent of the coaſt, of a bold rocky aſpect, and perfectly ſcreened from obſervation,

obſervation, where ſecurely we awaited the moment of fortune:—with delight we beheld the ſetting ſun ſink into the azure ſurge, and never with more rapture hailed the planet of night; ſhe roſe ſerenely on declining day, and caſt her gentle influence in trembling beams on the liquid mirror, ſcarcely ruffled by a breeze—then riding high into the heavens, ſhot her rays on the ſwelling canvaſs of the approaching veſſel, as true to the appointed hour, it anchored off the point.

" Secured thus of a retreat from danger, our only anxiety was the wounded youth—he lived—but in ſo uncertain a ſtate, as hardly created hopes of his recovery;—to convey him to the town, was (from conſequent inquiry and ſuſpicion) fraught with danger;

danger; beſides we had not the poſſibility of time, as already the ſhallop of the veſſel had put off to bear us from the ſhore, and the daſhing of the oars diſtinctly beat upon our ears; and to abandon him to lingering death in that unfrequented ſituation, was too great a breach of humanity to be practiſed; it was therefore reſolved to bear him with us to the veſſel, and as the boat touched the land, abandoning my horſe to the firſt fortunate finder, we entered it, and puſhing off, took the farewell view of our native ſoil.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

"THE air was almoſt a calm—the moon in her brighteſt ſplendour, and the waves ſcarce ſeemed to heave beneath the bark, as turning her prow from the ſhore, we began our voyage, cheered by every favourable omen.

"For

" For three weeks, with uninterrupted gales of proſperity, did we plough the billows, and almoſt in the intoxicating ſecurity of the moment, forgot the monitor of misfortune.

" The wounded ſtranger began to ſhew ſigns of approaching convaleſcence; his ſpeech, which had been denied to him thro' weakneſs, again returned, and his eyes, dimed by the film of death, reſumed their luſtre.

" I watched his couch with unremitting attention, and heard his firſt movements of ſurpriſe at the extraordinary ſituation he was in;—as ſoon as he could bear the recital, I informed him of the danger he had been reſcued from, and received his grateful thanks, mingled with heart rending complaints; —he mourned a wife—a child—and

called

called with unceaſing tears upon the name of Gertrude.

"Gertrude!" exclaimed the Knight, "good heavens! perhaps my ſiſter?"

"Yes, Bertram," continued de Clifford, "it was de Mowbray, thy ſiſter's huſband;—but hear the melancholy ſequel to a life of miſery.

"After ſteering our courſe ſucceſſfully, and beholding the promiſed land in view, our hopes were ſtained with ruin;—the cup of pleaſure juſt raiſed to the eager lip, was daſh'd with gall, and the glowing proſpects of liberty and glory, converted into chains and ignominy!

"The ſun had ſet on the laſt day of our voyage, as we expected his returning beams would light the wiſhed for ſhore, and his parting ſmiles infuſed

fuſed an unuſual joy into my boſom; de Mowbray in particular indulged in all the fairy phantoms of warm fancy; he intended inſtantly to return, and already ſaw himſelf re-waſted o'er the ſurge, when a long, an eternal bar was placed to his promiſed happineſs!

"Our veſſel was of no force, and unable to contend with a large Corſair that hovered round us during the ſhades of night, and attacked us by the firſt bluſh of dawn; however, we were determined (tho' ſo unequal in power) to conteſt the point, and rather be forced to take their chains, than tamely bend beneath the yoke.

"We come to ſeek a grave! was the general cry—where can it be gained more nobly than in the defence of freedom?—Liberty or death!"

"In

"In an inſtant our deck was crowded with the enemy, and the carnage began;—thrice did they charge our determined band, and thrice were they driven back with ſlaughter. De Mowbray, tho' faint with his unhealed wounds, ſprang to the fray, and nerved with frantic courage, beat down the foe on every ſide, till encircled by combatants he ſtood—fierce as the baited lion, and lowered deſtruction.

"I ſaw him fall, ſtruck by unnumbered ſwords;—I heard his laſt words—'Oh, Gertrude!—oh, my child!' but ſaw no more, felled ſenſeleſs to the deck, and arouſed to a knowledge of my miſery by the groans and ſighs of my wounded friends.

De

De Clifford for a moment could not proceed, overcome by the recollection of the dreadful ſcene;—tears ſtreamed from the eyes of Albert, and Sir Bertram was compelled to turn his face aſide to hide the ſtrong emotions of his ſoul;—at length the melancholy narrator recollecting himſelf, proceeded thus—

"Why muſt I dwell on—why call to my remembrance that horrid pauſe?—worſe than ten thouſand deaths, when reaſon firſt returning, conveyed to my tortured ſoul the immenſity of miſery!—the clank of chains ſtill vibrate in my ear!—the groans, and hopeleſs ſighs ſtill tear my heart! which flowed from the boſoms of my friends:—we were caſt into the noiſome hold of the veſſel, and loaded

with fetters, whose oppressive weight bound us to the floor.

"Then did I curse existence—then call for death, and imprecate my lot! but in vain, I was too minute a being to create a change in the wheels of fate, and was forced to submit.

"Having accomplished their designs, the victorious party directed their course to Algiers, whither we soon arrived, and were disposed of to the highest bidder.

"The object of the Corsair was to obtain captives, so that we were rather oppressed by numbers than vanquished by the sword; our wounds consequently were but trifling, and deemed of no moment by the purchasers. De Mowbray alone, did not appear—resolved on freedom or ruin, he had

compelled them to turn their edge on him, and fell!—

"Separated from each other, we, who had hoped to turn the tide of conqueſt beneath the banners of Alexis, were doomed to ſervitude and toil.

"I became the property of a merchant, and appointed to labour in the garden of a country houſe, ſituated on the verge of the ocean, not many miles diſtant from Algiers.

"Finding no alternative, and that deſpair would not mitigate my fate, I became reſigned, and at length tranquil; my days rolled on in the ſame dull uniformity, and the journal of one revolving ſun, would mark the catalogue of ſeventeen tedious years: a continuation of fidelity obtained me

confidence, and as I did not abuſe it, I was not watched with jealous rigour, and conſequently enjoyed more than my ſtate would ſeem to admit of.

"The ſituation where I reſided was romantic and engaging;—the ſhore bold and rocky, curbed the impetuous billows of the ocean, and added contraſt to the upland, which was cloathed with thick groves, and interſperſed with open vallies and ſolitary glens: tho' I was reſigned, ſtill an unconquerable melancholy hung over my ſpirits, and having the permiſſion, I frequently rambled along the eminence; now delighted with the blue expanſe of liquid ſurface, and now with the ſolemnity of the foreſt: the one detached my mind from its reflections,

reflections, the other ſoothed it to a pleaſingly penſive ſtate.

"One evening, having wandered more late than uſual thro' the cool ſhades of the grove, unconſcious of my path, and muſing on my paſt life, with folded arms, I was ſuddenly, on paſſing thro' a narrow glen, ſeized on by two men, and threatened with immediate death if I advanced;—tho' life was not of great value, ſtill I did not deſpiſe it, and accordingly promiſed obedience; but who ſhall judge of my aſtoniſhment, when on the inſtant a man darted from the thicket, exclaiming, in a well known voice—

"'Unhand him!—he is my friend!'

"And de Mowbray caught me in his arms: ſcarcely truſting the evidence of my ſenſes, I could only in

convulſed accents demand an explanation of the myſtery I beheld, to which he haſtily replied—

"At this moment, de Clifford, I cannot ſatisfy your curioſity, but reſt ſatisfied it ſhall not long be delayed;—now follow me."

"So ſaying, he led the way thro' the trees, and introduced me to a company of about thirty, ſeated in a retired ſpot of the glen.

"Behold!" he cried, as he advanced, "behold my much lamented friend! now found to ſweeten, and to ſtrike for liberty!"

"Though the energy of my heart was weakened, ſtill its pulſe had not ceaſed to throb;—at that name every nerve ſtarted, every faculty awoke, and I could only exclaim in broken

ſounds of aſtoniſhment, the name of "Liberty!"

"Ay!" he anſwered, "this hour its influence reigns, and ſlavery has ceaſed its ſway!"

"Tho' I could not comprehend in what manner this deſirable object was to be accompliſhed, ſtill the phantom was ſo pleaſing, and the idea, however fruitleſs, ſo dear to my ſoul, that I would not permit myſelf to doubt its poſſibility, and already in the ardour of imagination, had burſt my bonds!

"Sweet fancy!—deluſive cheriſher of miſery!—in that moment, by thy influence, the complicated woe of ſeventeen years was forgotten;—I ſeemed to have repaſſed the gulph of time, and totally eraſed from my memory the recollection, that its ſilent

hand had added their farther preſſure to my declining days.

"On looking round, I diſtinguiſhed among the bold adventurers for freedom, de Beleſme, Bigod and others, the ruined props of Robert's hopeleſs cauſe;—their lives, like mine, had rolled on in all the apathy of uniformity and ſervitude, till fortunately meeting at intervals, they laid the plan of an eſcape; their little band gained daily additions, and the deciſive moment of their fears and expectations was arrived.

"De Mowbray, like myſelf, had been directed to their retreat by chance, and though he had already related to them the means of his eſcape from death, yet ſeeing, by the inquiry of my looks, that I longed to

be acquainted with them, without apology began his narration.

"When you, my friend, with others, were conſigned, oppreſſed with chains, to the hold, the victors began to clear their deck, and having manned their prize, caſt the dead into the ſea.

"Having lain ſome time inſenſible, the ſuſpenſion of animation began to abate, and on the firſt movement made by the ſailors to throw me over board, I gave ſigns of life, upon which they exclaimed—

"That one of the *dogs* yet lived!

"The captain inſtantly examined my wounds, and finding ſome hopes of profit from the poſſibility of my recovery, had me conveyed to the cabin, and treated with every attention: on arriving at Algiers, I was conducted

to his own houſe, and the utmoſt care laviſhed to reſtore me to a ſtate of convaleſcence.

"From this apparent generoſity of my conquerors, I entertained hopes that farther might be gained, and already formed the ardent expectations of liberty. Alas! the idea was vain, for on my recovery (which was painful and tedious) the horror of my ſtate at once flaſhed on my mind; this attentive tenderneſs being only uſed to expedite the profit of my purchaſe, and reward, with a higher price, the toil and danger of my captor.

"I was expoſed to ſale, but no bidder advanced to buy; perhaps prohibited by my ſullen and downcaſt looks, which did not indicate a tame ſubmiſſion, but more probably by my pale

pale and languid looks, which ſtill hung on my dejected aſpect.

"Repeated efforts were made to accompliſh this object, but in vain, I ſtill returned unnoticed, and the captain found that I muſt remain on hand, to the diſappointment of his hopes and care.

"Soured by this unlooked for miſchance, he had me conveyed to a country reſidence he poſſeſſed not far from the city, and treated with extreme rigour;—from that period to the preſent, my days have been paſſed with anguiſh, and numbered by my ſighs; the recollection of thoſe dear relatives, that perhaps yet live to mourn my uncertain fate, has embittered every hour, chaſed repoſe from my pillow and tranquillity from the

day;

day; but now!—yes—now that ſhall ceaſe—the termination is arrived!—this night——"

"This night?" I exclaimed, with doubtful rapture and aſtoniſhment.

"This night!" anſwered every voice, "we graſp at liberty, or find an end to ſorrow in the grave!"

"They then informed me of their intentions, and projected plan; which was, as ſoon as total darkneſs gave them ſecurity, to proceed along the ſhore to the harbour of Algiers, and there ſeize on one of thoſe ſmall craft, which lay moſt in the offing, and immediately put to ſea.

"I approved of the deſign; it was the only one which promiſed ſucceſs, and inſtantly joined my fate to theirs:—with impatience did we wait for the proper

proper period of execution;—it at length arrived:—the evening was calm, and the ſky involved in clouds:—with throbbing hearts we reached the coaſt, and deſcending among the rocks, proceeded in that direction, in order to ſeize the firſt ſmall boat which might be there moored, as a number of fiſhermens huts were ſcattered about the upland, and ſeemed to further our bold undertaking.

"At length one was diſcovered of the largeſt ſize;—it contained our whole party;—and forcibly wrenching away the chain which held it, we puſhed from land, with a ſilent oar, directing our courſe from obſervation into the boſom of the deep.

"Having ſufficiently ſecured ourſelves, we bent the prow towards the harbour

harbour of Algiers, and without difficulty reached it by the direction of its lights, which alſo pointed out to us the object of our ſearch.

"A tolerable large veſſel lay ſecurely at anchor; part of its crew on ſhore, the remainder ſunk in ſlumber, all but a ſingle man who watched on deck;—we heard his ſtep, and drawing in our oars, floated ſilently along ſide;—the night was extremely dark, ſo that unobſerved we aſcended, and ſeizing the guard, impoſed taciturnity on him by the threat of death.

"Having thus far ſucceeded, our next care was to cloſe down the hatches, and by that means ſecured the remainder of the crew; then unfurling the ſails, with a fortunate gale which ſprung

ſprung up from the land, bade adieu to ſlavery and Algiers!

"All night we ploughed the deep, and the returning dawn brought us ſecurity;—afraid to permit the crew to aſcend the deck, or take the management of the veſſel (not doubting but they would run her into ſome hoſtile port) we ſupplied them with proviſions thro' the grating, and ignorant of nautical affairs, committed ourſelves to the direction of chance.

"Fortune for once was favourable, we gained the harbour of Venice, and giving liberty to the Moors, permitted them to depart with their veſſel, as a reward for the ſervice we had reaped by their misfortune.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

"HAVING landed, thoſe who were reſtrained by no terror, returned to their native country, while thoſe whom dread had forced into exile, not knowing what ſteps to purſue, or where to find a home, now firſt felt that freedom was not without its pangs.

"While

" While we were deliberating what plans to adopt for future exiſtence, a new and extraordinary meaſure at once baniſhed all doubt, and determined our reſolves.

" The cruſades had then been firſt agitated, and the weſtern world had poured its armies into the plains of Aſia.

" Gregory the Seventh we knew had formed the bold deſign of freeing the Holy City from the empire of the Creſcent, but was unable to perfect his wiſh, from the continual and enormous invaſion he made on the civil power of princes, but now what that pontiff was not adequate to compleat, we heard, Martin the ſecond had atchieved, thro' the inſtigation of Peter the Hermit, who ſtruck with horror at the

ſufferings he, with other devout pilgrims, had undergone, in their journey to the ſacred ſhrine, and the indignity offered to it by its barbarous maſters, excited by his melancholy narration, the ſpirit of Martin, and compleated the hazardous undertaking;—the council of Placentia, and afterwards that of Clermont, had joined the pontiff's wiſh; the Princes of Europe were in arms, and already had deluged with their hardy bands, the plains of Aſia.

"Here was then the object of our deliberations diſcovered—we reſolved to join the adventurers, and enrol ourſelves beneath the Chriſtian croſs, to which another impulſe beſides neceſſity prompted us, as we heard that Robert, Duke of Normandy, was among the moſt conſpicuous of the enthuſiaſtic

enthuſiaſtic princes, and doubted not but we ſhould find the termination of our misfortunes under his generous aſſiſtance.

"Enflamed with the ſtrongeſt hopes, we ſet forward, accompanied by de Mowbray, who hopeleſs of finding thoſe he moſt adored ſtill living, and ſeeing the proſpect of but a ſhort campaign crowned with glory, determined to ſhare our fortunes, and alſo advanced to join the weſtern powers.

"Our expectations from the noble Robert were realized;—having overtaken the forces on the banks of the Boſphorus, oppoſite to Conſtantinople, where they aſſembled, we ſought the Prince, and were received with the moſt cordial affection; his generous heart bled for our misfortunes, and at

the recital of our woes, the gallant warriors did not bluſh to ſhed a commiſerating tear.

"From him we learned the termination of that invaſion, the commencement of which had afforded us an opportunity of eſcaping from England;—the rupture had not broken out as intended;—William, at the head of a powerful army, entered his territory, but an accommodation was effected by the mediation of ſome powerful Barons, and the avaricious King had retired, contented with obtaining poſſeſſion of Eu, the towns of Aumale, Feſchaimp, and ſeveral other places, on condition of aſſiſting him in ſubduing Maine, which had revolted, and reſtoring the Barons attainted in his cauſe to their eſtates, at the ſame time entering

entering into a ſtipulation, that on the death of either without iſſue, the ſurvivor ſhould inherit his dominions.

"Thus," he continued, "I yet may be enabled to reward my friends!"

"In a ſhort time the army proceeded on its march, and the eventful moments of their bold enterprize commenced.

"Nice, the ſeat of the Turkiſh empire, after an obſtinate ſiege, was taken, and their monarch, Soliman, defeated in two grand engagements;—in every action Robert ſhone conſpicuous; his zeal for the cauſe prompted him to mortgage his dukedom to his brother William, in order to appear with becoming pomp; and his courage, while it ſupported, in-

ſpired the hardy files with invincible valour.

"The Turkiſh authority trembled, and was finally reduced in the capture of Antioch, and Jeruſalem, which had groaned under their power, fell beneath that of our friend and ally, the ſoldan of Egypt; his dominion had been curbed by the growing greatneſs of the haughty Soleman, and the ſacred city forced from beneath his ſcepter; but now, when his bold competitor was humbled, he reſumed his ſway, and forgetful of the hand that raiſed him, refuſed to ſurrender the holy walls into the Chriſtian keeping, and preſcribing rules for the victors, would only promiſe ſecurity to the pious pilgrims who hereafter ſhould viſit the hallowed ſhrine.

"His

"His terms were rejected, and the ſiege of the city commenced;—after a tedious delay of five weeks (ill according with the impetuous valour of the troops) it was determined to carry it by aſſault;—twice was it attacked with fruitleſs bravery, and on the third I bore from the trenches the expiring de Mowbray; he had received a wound in the breaſt with a ſpear, and hardly breathed as I raiſed him from among the dead.

"Alas! de Clifford," he ſaid, in a faint and tremulous voice, as he caſt his languid eye on me, "here ſets my waneing ſun!—I had a wife—a child;—perhaps they yet live;—thy ſteps will bend to England;—ſeek them in Mowbray Caſtle;—tell them my hapleſs fate!—yet do not wring their

bosoms with a tear.—My child, my Albert!—if yet he breathes, a brother's generous care has given him fortune;—tell him I fell the champion of the Christian cross, nor died dishonoured!—My wife—my Gertrude! she too will pay thy friendly labour with a sigh.—My Bertram!——"

"He could no more—death stopped his utterance, and as he breathed his last on my bursting bosom, the sounding trumpet called me to the charge.

"This last effort was final;—a breach was made, and the triumphant bands poured into the conquered city: our object was now obtained—the sacred shrine no longer owned a pagan sway, and the bold soldiers, reeking from slaughter, threw by their arms,

and

and advancing to the hallowed ſpot, poured forth their adorations in ſilent prayers, or peals of choral anthems;—we gazed!—we adored!—we wept!—

"Thus at the termination of our career, my thoughts were turned to England;—no longer lying under an interdict, and reſtored to my eſtates. I ſought the body of de Mowbray;—Robert—the generous Robert, ſhed a tear over his untimely fate, and had his honoured remains depoſited within the holy walls. I attended him to the grave, and felt a grateful ſatisfaction ſwell thro' my boſom, as the hoary warriors with folded arms and downcaſt looks, ſhed their ſilent ſorrow on his humble ſod;—it was the reward of his merit—it was the laſt mortal tribute!

"Our

"Our toils being thus ended, and the Chriſtian conquerors having choſen Godfrey of Boüillon, King of Jeruſalem, the ſeveral princes began to turn their thoughts towards home, among whom was the bold and intrepid Robert;—crowned with laurels, and loud in the records of fame, he began his journey, and inſiſted on my attending him.

"In our route thro' Italy, delighted with the climate, and eager to indulge himſelf after the toils of war, he viſited a former acquaintance, the Count of Converſana, with whom he intended to remain a ſhort time;—it was in vain that I urged my anxiety to reviſit my native land, he was wedded to my company, and compelled me to attend him.

"His

"His ſhort ſtay had been now prolonged to a year, thro' the means of Sibylla the Count's fair daughter, whoſe charms ſpread love's ſnare over the ſuſceptible heart of the Duke, and finally induced him to marry her; when unable longer to endure the impatience of my ſpirit, I again urged my deſires, and obtained leave to depart for England, the Duke ſtill lingering in the arms of his blooming wife.

"On the wings of anxiety, I flew, after an abſence of twenty years, to hail my native land, and on my arrival heard that William was dead, and his brother Henry on the throne;—thus has the eaſy Robert loſt a crown for a moment's rapture, and blaſted the hopes of his friends!"

He

He then continued to relate the circumstances of Mowbray Castle, and concluded with their escape from the ruined residence of the robbers.

Sir Bertram, at the termination of his eventful history, sat a considerable time absorbed in the most profound contemplation; at length starting up, and pointing to Albert, he exclaimed—

"Behold de Mowbray's son!"

Then before they could make any reply, presenting the portrait to the youth, he added—

"And here, thy mother!"

Albert gazed on it with a vacant eye, and in a tremulous voice replied—"Good

"Good heaven!—it is thy ſiſter!—am I indeed——"

"Yes," anſwered the Knight, interrupting him, and catching him to his boſom, "you are the ſon of Robert—the image of my Gertrude—de Mowbray's heir!"—

Albert could not ſpeak; aſtoniſhment held every faculty ſuſpended; for ſome time he ſat devoid of motion, while the big tears rolled down his cheeks; at length throwing himſelf at the feet of Sir Bertram, he caught his hand, and with an apprehenſive look of doubt, exclaimed—

"Oh, ſir! do not trifle with the feelings of the wretched—I came to ſeek your favour—to find a friend would ſhield the orphan Albert, and

ſcreen

ſcreen his houſeleſs ſorrow from perſecution!—then eaſe my throbbing heart—am I indeed, indeed! de Mowbray's ſon?"

"As true as heaven protects the juſt," anſwered the Knight, "and will purſue the guilty!"

Rapture flaſhed to the eye of Albert, and checked his tears; he roſe from the ground, and preſſing his hand to his forehead, traverſed the room with ſlow and penſive ſteps;—at length ſtarting, he cried—

"I cannot doubt—it muſt be ſo!—I think, ſir," he continued, addreſſing himſelf to de Clifford, "I think you ſay my father fell before Jeruſalem—but tell me—does yet my mother live?"

"Albert,"

"Albert," ſaid Sir Bertram, "ſeek not to penetrate the myſtery, of which we yet are ignorant; the time is not far diſtant that ſhall clear all, and give the injured orphan heir his title!"

The youth was ſilent, and the Knight turning to de Clifford, demanded of him, what ſteps he propoſed to purſue, now that he had regained his native land, in order to obtain his forfeited eſtate?

"Of that I am yet ignorant," he replied, "had William ſtill filled the throne, from the articles of treaty entered into with Robert, I ſhould entertain no doubt of immediately ſucceeding to my demands;—but now his

his younger brother holds the rule, and makes my hope precarious."

"True," anſwered Sir Bertram, "nor can you judge how far he would wiſh to reſtore the friends of Robert to their former power, when he can ſcarcely doubt but he will diſpute his title to the crown."

"I fear," continued de Clifford, "the mind that gained him a kingdom, will not fail to point out to him the impolicy of ſuch a meaſure;—but I have ever been the ſport of fortune from my earlieſt days to the grey hairs of age, and from the contemplation of her manner, have become reconciled to her ficklenеſs."

"My advice," ſaid Sir Bertram, "would be to ſteer a middle courſe, and remain ſilent until the preſent turbulent

turbulent times ſubſide to peace, in which caſe, if Robert ſtrikes for a kingdom and ſucceeds, de Clifford will not be forgotten;—ſhould he fail, in Normandy you ſtill may gain ſecurity."

"I have been ſo long," he anſwered, "ſubſervient to the will of others, that I have almoſt ceaſed to think I ever poſſeſſed one; however, as your advice ſeems particularly adapted to the exigency of the moment, I ſhall not heſitate to adopt it."

"And till you ſee a fortunate termination to your affairs, remember, for yourſelf and friends, my caſtle is a home."

De Clifford returned him the thanks his liberality ſo juſtly merited, and as the waneing night warned them

to repoſe, after a ſlight repaſt, they retired to reſt.

The next day Sir Bertram was again cloſeted with Hubert, and after a conſiderable time ſpent in converſation, diſmiſſing him he returned to his gueſts;—an evident melancholy hung on his features, which in vain he endeavoured to ſhake off;—his mirth ſeemed forced—he ſunk into temporary reveries, frequently breathing the name of Gertrude, and often with a ſigh exclaiming—

"Ah, wretched ſiſter!"

Then would he catch the arm of Albert, and with a look overflowing with anguiſh, cry—"Unhappy

"Unhappy youth! thy mother was —but no, the dreadful intelligence will reach thee much too ſoon; — oh, Gertrude! — oh, my ſiſter! — —"

Albert himſelf having paſſed a ſleepleſs night from the agitation of his mind, was languid and dejected, while as he pondered on his father's misfortunes, the recollection of them compelled him frequently to turn aſide his head, in order to hide the ſilent tear that trickled down his cheek.

A deep melancholy pervaded Bertram Caſtle for the day, which the ſucceeding dawn, was in part diſſipated, by the arrival of a meſſenger from Lord de Mowbray, ſoliciting the preſence of the Knight, the enſuing day,

at the nuptials of Lady Jane and the ſon of Wenlock.

Aſtoniſhment held Albert mute during the delivery of the meſſage, on hearing the name of Jane, inſtead of Mary, and a glow of rapture ſwelled thro' his boſom, tho' he could not frame any reaſon for this ſo ſudden, and to him myſterious change.

The Knight very readily accepted the invitation of de Mowbray, and the next day prepared to ſet out to his Caſtle.

"You muſt be my companion de Clifford," he ſaid, "you may be wanting on matters of importance; beſides,

beſides, my familiarity with de Mowbray will give a ſanction to this liberty."

De Clifford bowed aſſent to his friend's requeſt, and Sir Bertram ordering horſes, ſaid to Albert as he mounted—

"Be cautious, and ſecret;—keep thy own council;—the criſis of thy fate draws near, and doubt not of a happy termination!"

So ſaying, they rode off, and Albert returned into the caſtle, filled with that variety of reflections, his uncertain and altered ſtate naturally produced; dividing his ſoul between his future proſpects, his father's fate, and the probability of yet calling the early object of his affections, the gentle Mary, his.

CHAP. VII.

AT de Mowbray's, all was preparation for the approaching union;—the sun set on their labours, and the returning dawn beamed on their continuation.

The

The nobility of the country were ſummoned to the joyful feſtival, and its boldeſt youth challenged by Sir Reginald, and Harcourt, to break a ſpear on two ſucceeding days, when alternately the daring champions threw down their gauntlet to the field.

The park, which ſeparated the grove from the caſtle, was appointed for the tournament;—the pailing was levelled, and a balcony erected for the Lady Jane, and the other bright maids who attended to behold the conflict, and warm the emulative ardour of the youthful combatants, by the bright glances of their beaming eyes.

De Mowbray, tho' ſick and languid, reſolved to exert himſelf at this happy

moment, and accordingly attended his blooming daughter to the altar, where ſuffuſed in bluſhes, ſhe gave her hand to the enraptured Harcourt.

The remainder of the day was paſſed in mirth and feſtivity, while the receeding orb of day, was ſcarcely miſſed in the dazzling blaze that chaſed the ſhadows of eve:—all was joy and ecſtacy; the hall re-echoed with the voice of muſic, and the mazy dance gave wings of down to the gliding hours, 'till the deep toned bell of midnight, warned them to unwelcome ſlumber, from their ſports, where the lovely Jane ſhone the unrivalled conſtellation of the ſphere.

The

The next day was appointed as the firſt of the tournament;—the blooming bride, attended by the Lords Wenlock and de Mowbray, ſeated herſelf in the front of the balcony, to reward with a laurel crown, the victor of the field; while Sir Bertram, and de Clifford, were appointed marſhals of the liſts.

The trumpets ſounded, and from the barrier Sir Reginald rode forward, mounted on a furious charger, caſed in burniſhed ſteel, and bearing on his ſhield a trophy, under which the word, "Victorious!" flamed in golden letters.

For a conſiderable time he traverſed the field unoppoſed, and was about to claim the laurel, when a Knight ſprung forward, and as his trumpet brayed

defiance, darted on the determined youth;—at the firſt outſet their lances ſhivered, and Sir Reginald's adventurous opponant was unhorſed;—a ſecond ſhared the ſame fate, and the remaining company, diſmayed by the diſcomfiture of a third, who oppoſed his arm, permitted him to range the liſts uncontrouled, until the marſhals declared him conqueror, and de Mowbray with exultation ſaw the laurel placed by the hands of the peerleſs Jane, on the brows of his victorious ſon.

Returning to the caſtle, the remainder of the day and night were waſted with the accuſtomed feſtivity, and the following dawn beheld the field

field appointed according to the arrangement of the former one.

Harcourt was the hero of the conteſt; his Gauntlet was tendered, and accepted by a number of Knights, who had reſerved themſelves for this day's combat, in the hopes of foiling the maſter of the feaſt.

On a milk white ſteed he gallopped to the centre of the liſts, clad in flameing ſteel waved with gold; three ſnowy plumes floated from his helmet, and on his ſhield he wore a blazing ſun, under which were the words "In full ſplendour!"

A number of Knights, in ſucceſſion tried their fortune againſt the gallant youth,

youth, but all in vain—ſchooled to arms in the rugged plains of war, he foiled their force, and remained the undiſputed maſter of the field, when as the marſhals were going to adjudge him the prize of conqueſt, they were ſtopped by a diſtant trumpet, proclaiming a competitor, and almoſt inſtantly a ſtrange Knight, horſed on a black ſteed, and bearing on his ſhield a moon emerging from a cloud, with the ſingle word "Riſing!" ſprung forward to conteſt the palm with the victorious youth.

He did not take advantage of his unguarded ſituation, but giving him time to collect himſelf, with their ſpears in the reſt, as the trumpet ſounded, they fiercely encountered.

The

The weapons ſhivered, but the youths remained firm in their ſaddles; when as if by mutual conſent, they wheeled round to their ſeveral barriers, and taking from their 'ſquires a ſecond lance, of firmer texture, rode forward at full ſpeed, and met each other's ſhock with like ſucceſs.

They drew their ſwords, and with determined arm then attacked each other, but without making the leaſt impreſſion;—fire flaſhed from the blazing ſteel, but their wary caution, and conſummate ſkill, warded the angry blows aſide; they charged—they retreated, but with ſimilar effect, and at length (their ſteeds all foam, and themſelves faint with the fruitleſs ſtruggle) as the marſhals were going to

interpoſe,

interpoſe, the furious Wenlock trembling for the fortune of Harcourt, and enraged at the bold defence of the ſtranger, in a haughty voice, exclaimed, "Forbear!"

Then turning to his ſon (while paſſion lightned from his eye) he commanded him to puniſh the temerity of the unknown.

Rouſed to renewed courage by the words of his father, immediately turned his hoſtile edge on the bold competitor for fame, who not leſs prepared, received his firſt impetuous ſhock, and inſtantly cloſed on him in deadly ſtrife.

Every boſom beat high with expectation, and every eye was directed on the

the ardent warriors, who with renewed ſtrength, foiled each other's ſkill, yet neither could turn the ſcale of victory, till at length it ſeemed to preponderate in favour of Harcourt, who with a furious blow cleft the ſtranger's ſhield, at the ſame inſtant when the cone and floating plumes were cut ſheer from his own helmet.

Still undiſmayed, his bold opponent continued the angry ſtrife, and ſoon with a marked and wary ſtroke, cut the thongs of Harcourt's caſque, which fell to the ground, and both encountering with mutual ſhock; the ſon of Wenlock was beat to the earth, and the unknown ſtruck from his ſaddle to the crupper of his horſe, which taking fright, ſtarted acroſs the field,

and

and by the violence of the motion threw him off, but ſoon regained his feet; the warriors now diſmounted, were preparing to continue the fight, when again the marſhals and ſurrounding knights, advancing to interfere, and prevent the effuſion of blood, were checked by the voice of Wenlock, who exclaimed—

"Forbear!—let him conquer or periſh!"

They accordingly retired, and the fray continued with unceaſing fury, till with a deep wound in the head, Harcourt was ſtretched on the plain, and the unknown Knight ſlightly touched in the arm; ſeeing himſelf victorious, he flew to his ſteed, which his 'ſquire had re-taken, and vaulting into

into the ſaddle, triumphantly rode to the balcony, in order to receive from the hand of Lady Jane, the reward he claimed over her vanquiſhed huſband.

She had fallen ſenſeleſs into the arms of Wenlock, and on the ſtranger's raiſing his hand to ſeize the laurel, de Mowbray ſtarting up, gazed for a moment, and with a violent exclamation, fell lifeleſs on his ſeat.

All was confuſion, and the unknown being about to retire, Wenlock in a furious voice, called out to take the ruffian! which the Knights at the barrier preparing to do, Sir Bertram and de Clifford, marſhals of the field, ſprung with drawn ſwords to the paſs, in order to protect (as was their duty)

the law of arms, and reſiſting the ungenerous and baſe purpoſe of the crowd, permitted the ſtranger and his ſquire to depart unmoleſted.

In the mean time, his attendants had raiſed the wounded Harcourt, and (together with de Mowbray, and his daughter) conveyed him into the caſtle, where conducted to ſeparate apartments, they ſlowly recovered: the old Lord, whoſe former illneſs, and preſent exertion, had reduced to a very weak ſtate, did not ſoon throw off the myſterious inanimation, and when he did, it was only to vent himſelf in the moſt incoherent expreſſions.

His friends ſtood round his bed, but he did not ſeem ſenſible of their preſence,

ſence, exclaiming, with a look of horror, as he caſt his haggard glances around—

"Ha! there again—will no one take him from my ſight?—down, down!—his glances pierce my ſoul!—oh, ſpare me!—I am a poor old man, and will not long enjoy it!—give me a little bread, and I will fly ſociety for ever—ſo that you do not follow me to puniſh!"

"What does my Lord mean?" ſaid Sir Bertram, "there are none but friends here."

De Mowbray ſtarted at his words, and caſting a vacant look at him, in a tremulous voice added—

"I ſhould know that ſound—come near me—Ha! catch his arm!—wreſt

from him that fell dagger! I will confeſs!—is not that Bertram?—I have wronged thee—you thought me once your friend—your boſom friend—Ha, ha, ha!—to ſee how men can be deceived—I do not poſſeſs much craft—yet can I cheat the world."

Aſtoniſhment ſtruck the ſouls of thoſe who encircled him, and Sir Bertram, who knew the ſpring that actuated the ſoul of the frantic de Mowbray, treaſured each word with an attentive ear.

After a ſhort pauſe of reſt, which his debilitated ſtate compelled him to, he again continued to mutter in a low and hollow tone, to himſelf.——

"Murder!

"Murder!—did he ſay murder?—then 'tis diſcovered!—but what care I?—if Robert died am I to blame?—tell Bertram that his ſiſter is gone, and I poſſeſs the rule in Mowbray—ſhe had no heir!—'tis falſe!—who ſays that Albert was her ſon?"

As he uttered theſe laſt words, Sir Reginald, who had been occupied in attending on Harcourt, entered the chamber, and fearful, from the words of his father, that ſome ſurmiſes might be created among his friends, he haſtily removed them from the room, by diverting their care to the wounded youth, and his ſtill languid ſiſter.

All but Sir Bertram retired, and he being determined not to quit de

Mowbray, was permitted to remain, as Sir Reginald ſeeing him reſolved, could not inſiſt, and reluctantly departed with the other gueſts.

The Knight entertained no doubt but that raſh adventurous, tho' victorious ſtranger, was Albert; yet he could not form any idea of what could ſo ſuddenly agitate the boſom of de Mowbray, and accordingly formed the reſolution of watching his every word, in hopes that ſomething favourable to the youth might tranſpire.

After a ſhort pauſe of reſt, the old Lord, reſtored to a ſpecies of tranquillity, burſt into a flood of tears, which ſubſiding, reaſon once more returned; — he gazed around with aſtoniſhment,

aſtoniſhment, and caſting his eyes about, at length fixed them on Sir Bertram (the only perſon in the chamber) whom he addreſſed with looks of wonder.

"Good heaven! where am I?—my friend, how is this, do I yet live?—methinks I have ſlept, and in that ſleep, ſuch dreams!—but no matter—I fear I have ſtrangely wandered?"

"No farther than the truth, my Lord," anſwered the Knight, "I am not ignorant of the cauſe that dictated, and would now adviſe a candid acknowledgment of all."

"Of all!—Sir Bertram—I pray you do not impute ought to the wild ravings of diſtempered fancy? I cannot anſwer for the whim of madneſs!"

"My Lord, it is not without method;—I would not wiſh to cloud with ſorrow your final hour—but nature—juſtice—inclination, calls upon me to ſearch a ſiſter's wrongs!"

"A ſiſter's wrongs!—do they lie at my charge?—what know I of your ſiſter? if ſhe is loſt muſt I reſtore her?"

"My Lord, this is meer play on words—that I am not ignorant of your guilt——"

"My guilt! Sir Bertram—beware——"

"Ay, ſir, your guilt! and ſince you ſtill perſiſt in the denial, I will expoſe it to the eye of day—the world ſhall judge it!—and this arm revenge!"

"Bertram, be calm—perhaps *I am guilty*—and yet it hurts me, my friend, ſhould hold me ſo—but let me not confeſs

confeſs an unknown crime—what know you?"

"All!—but firſt a few plain queſtions—How came the eſtate of Mowbray to your hands?"

"My brother Robert fell by the ſword of unknown aſſaſſins, and I the only remaining branch of the family inherited——"

"And his wife?"

"I knew not that he had one."

"Nor a child?"

"Of that I am alſo equally, and totally ignorant."

"So thinks the world, and the true caſe is confined to a narrow circle;—but hear me—thy acts are all unveiled, this boſom holds the ſecret, and ſhall claim juſtice from the throne of power!—my ſiſter Gertrude's ſpirit ſhall be revenged, and her injured heir, the orphan

orphan Albert, receive his father's fortunes!"

"Hear me, Sir Bertram, I am now convinced you know me!—all ſhall be done, as you require—but, oh, remember—I have not many days of life!—let not my final hour be daſhed with ſorrow!"

"De Mowbray—I accord—it ſhall be ſecret on one condition."

"Name it—it is already granted."

"That the true heir, at your demiſe, may be enabled to ſecure his title by a preſent full confeſſion."

"Confeſſion!—cried Sir Reginald, burſting open the door, and ruſhing into the chamber, with a furious aſpect —"From whom, and what?—who is he that aſks it?—Sir Bertram, I have over-heard

over-heard thy arrogant demands, and now require thy right to claim them!"

"The right of juſtice!—of unveiling guilt, and raiſing the oppreſſed from miſery!"

"Doubtleſs, you weigh your words—but, ſir, remember that de Mowbray will never ſtoop to mean confeſſions!"

"But the baſe uſurper of de Mowbray's ſeat ſhall ſtoop!"

"Uſurper!—Sir Bertram—beware or even this roof ſhall not protect!"

"Raſh—inconſiderate boy—the bolt of ruin is already forged!—urge not its ſpeed, but rather kneel and deprecate its wrath; you are known!"

"And to be known is all our boaſt!—but hear me, Sir Knight—you have had your day—the turn is ours—you have made accuſations, and can

no doubt ſupport them by a proof ſtrong as the guilt alledged—if not——

"If not," replied Sir Bertram, "I aſk not credit!"

"And if 'tis done," anſwered Sir Reginald, "I ſeek no mercy!"

"Enough!" continued the Knight, "till then ſtop we the altercation, and forget the kindling animoſity."

So ſaying, he quitted the chamber, and privately diſpatched a ſervant to his caſtle, with orders for Hubert and Albert to attend him, adding an injunction, that they would reach de Mowbray's with the utmoſt expedition and ſecrecy.

Harcourt's wound not being extremely dangerous, the fears of his friends

friends were in part abated, tho' the feſtivity was totally deſtroyed, and that manſion, which a few hours before reſounded with the voice of mirth, and burſts of joy, now ſeemed deſerted of its jocund inhabitants, and only reſorted to by the diſcontented victims of melancholy and ſorrow.

The greater number of the gueſts retired, and only thoſe remained, whoſe connexion with the parties intereſted them materially in their fate;—of this latter number (tho' with a far different motive) was Sir Bertram and his friend;—he determined not to leave the caſtle until de Mowbray had confeſſed Albert's right, and yielded to him the title of his juſt inheritance.

The

The old Lord himſelf, encouraged by the words of Sir Reginald, began to waver in his intended compliance with Sir Bertram's demands.

He doubted not but the Knight was fully acquainted with his guilt, but reflected with a ſpecies of pleaſure on the apparent impoſſibility of his procuring proof, and without that, nothing could be dreaded; for what would his bare aſſertion do againſt the credit of a fair unblemiſhed character?—beſides the cauſe—Albert—the orphan Albert—one to whom his kindneſs had been profuſe;—every idea ſerved to confirm ſecurity, and he at length (forgetting the cauſe of his ſudden illneſs) reſolved obſtinately to deny Sir Bertram's aſſertions.

aſſertions, unleſs ſupported by incontrovertible evidence.

Sir Reginald, on the other hand (equally certain that without concurring teſtimony, all was ſafe) dreaded his father's weakneſs, which was increaſed by his near approaching diſſolution, and trembled leſt an unguarded moment, or uncautions word, might betray what he ſo ardently ſought to conceal.

With every argument in his power, did he ſtrengthen his reſolution, and could almoſt have plunged his poniard in his expiring parent's boſom, in order to choak the diſcovery by his death.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the disagreeable situation of Sir Bertram at the castle, he did not fail to pay every attention in his power to those that required it, and particularly to Harcourt, who though guiltless, laboured under the violent displeasure of his furious

furious father, who curſed his weak timidity, at permitting a ſtranger to tear from his brow that laurel he had ſo nearly gained.——

Mary, the gentle Mary, was oppreſſed with a continual, and irreſiſtible melancholy;—feſtivity could not allay it, nor did the preſent circumſtances add much to its force;—the cauſe aroſe from the rooted paſſions of the heart, and it was not in the power of a moment to change it.

She pined for the abſence of Albert, and tho' the poſſibility of his ſafety prevented deſpair, yet its uncertainty preyed on her ſpirits, and caſt a gloom over her features;—ſhe did not withdraw herſelf from the mirthful circle,

but at the ſame time that ſhe mingled with, ſhe did not partake its pleaſures, and now that a ſudden, and ſad reſerve had chaſed away the ſcene, ſhe felt a ſympathy agitate her boſom, tho' not ſufficient to abſorb the melancholy of her thoughts.

Early the next day, the ſervant whom Sir Bertram had diſpatched, returned, and gave him notice that Albert and Hubert had ſecretly arrived, and concealed themſelves in the grove, where they expected to receive his orders how to act.

The Knight, who expected them with the utmoſt impatience, haſtened immediately to join them, and giving them the proper inſtructions, found

no

no difficulty (as the domeſtics of the caſtle were employed in the ſeveral chambers where the invalids lay) to introduce them, unnoticed, into an apartment immediately next to that in which was de Mowbray, where joining his friend to the party, he left them, ſaying to Hubert as he quitted the chamber—

"Remember, thy hopes of mercy alone depend on a full and clear confeſſion!—deviate from that, and certain ruin follows!"

So ſaying, he departed, and ſought de Mowbray, whom he found in cloſe and earneſt converſation with Sir Reginald;—on entering he addreſſed them——

"Though painful to us both, my Lord, yet am I called on to renew the converſation of yeſterday, and hope that a broad acquittal of your conduct will eaſe my boſom of its doubts, and clear your fame from its imputations."

"An inveſtigation into my actions," replied de Mowbray, "is what I earneſtly deſire, and truſt that thoſe whom the public report will not ſatisfy, an accurate ſcrutiny may convince."

"Beſides," ſaid Sir Reginald, with an haughty air, "altho' we do not confeſs Sir Bertram's right to queſtion, ſtill we will ſtoop to meet the charge!"

"But then, I truſt," ſaid de Mowbray, "that Sir Bertram, has not

not advanced what cannot be ſupported by concurring proof?"

"It is an allegation, my Lord," he anſwered, "too ſerious in its nature, and of too much moment to be brought forward from the breath of rumour, and——"

"Words will not clear the point," cried Sir Reginald, with impatience, "it lies upon the evidence—let them appear!"

"They ſhall," replied Sir Bertram, in a firm voice, "upon their faith I build."

Then ſtamping with his foot—he pauſed a moment, and Albert entered the chamber; as he advanced, Sir Reginald ſtarted, but endeavouring to conceal his emotion, he retired to a

window, muttering to himself, and exclaiming, in a low voice——

"Damnation!—he—here!—no matter, we still have hope!"

—De Mowbray did not betray less astonishment than his son; but soon recollecting himself, he assumed a placid tranquil air, and stretching out his hand to him, as he approached the bed, said——

"Albert, restored!—this is unlooked for happiness!"

But suddenly recoiling from his touch, he cast his haggard glances on him, frequently repeating in a deep tone——

"That ring!—that fatal ring!"

Here

Here was the myſtery of the preceding day elucidated, and the victorious ſtranger proclaimed, on whoſe hand glittered the gem which ſhook de Mowbray's ſoul;—on ſeeing it the ſecond time, it had a ſimilar effect:—it was the ſame Albert had diſcovered in the Myſtic Caſtle, and conveyed more to the mind of the guilty Lord, than was yet unveiled.

A trembling agitated his whole frame, and after a pauſe, which evidently marked the dreadful tumult of his thoughts, he exclaimed—

"It is vain to ſtruggle, or to hope—heaven wills it, and I muſt ſubmit;—then hear me, Bertram—Albert is——"

"Is what!" cried Sir Reginald, in a furious voice, ſpringing to the bed-ſide, "an orphan—an outcaſt, dependant on our bounty!"—then turning to the Knight, he continued, "what, ſir, from this, would you infer?—is Albert evidence of our black guilt, and does he mean to convict us from our kindneſs?"

"Patience! intemperate youth," anſwered Sir Bertram, "the proofs may come too ſtrong!"

"They muſt be forcible, to prop ſo weak a cauſe!"

Sir Bertram did not reply, but again ſtamping with his foot, pauſed for a moment, and Hubert entered the chamber.

At

At ſight of him, the haughty air of Sir Reginald fell, and a deadly paleneſs overſpread his features; utterance was totally precluded, and his fixed and haggard eyes were ſternly caſt upon him.

"Perhaps," ſaid the Knight, "perhaps this evidence may prove ſome points!"

"All!" cried de Mowbray, "all!—I had hopes my guilt might have remained unknown to all but to the torments of my own ſad boſom—but him——"

"He ſhall not live to ſpeak our ſhame!" vociferated Sir Reginald, arouſed from his ſtupor by his father's voice, and ſtarting forward, as he drew his

his ſword to plunge it into Hubert's heart, "this arm ſhall pay his perfidy!"—But at that moment, the wary Albert caught his arm, and the uſeleſs weapon dropped to the ground;—fruſtrated in his deſperate deſign, he traverſed the chamber ſeveral times with a diſordered ſtep, folding his hands over his forehead, and uttering deep groans; when ſuddenly ſtarting, he caſt a fierce look on the old domeſtic, and ruſhed out of the chamber.

Sir Bertram now approached the bed where de Mowbray lay in ſilent agony: as the Knight addreſſed him, he raiſed himſelf in a frantic manner, and exclaimed——

"I have

"I have no ſubterfuge—my guilt is plain!—I will confeſs!" then ſinking into a ſad deſpondent voice, he added, "but, oh, protect my fame—my children!"

"A clear confeſſion," ſaid Sir Bertram, "will heal all wounds;—I come not to expoſe, but to redreſs."

"Enough!" he cried, "then hear me; Albert is de Mowbray's heir!—the tale is long, and mocks my ſtrength;—another time I will explain all thoſe black deeds which raiſed me to a ſtate I thought to make perpetual;—but now——"

"That," anſwered the Knight, "returning health may do; at preſent, to fix the orphan's undiſputed title, is all I ſeek.

So-

So saying, he gave the last signal, and de Clifford entered, in order to witness the due signature of de Mowbray, to an article Sir Bertram had prepared on the preceding day.

His affinity to the usurper, and the recollection to former friendship, induced him rather to wish (if Albert could thus obtain his right) to conceal his guilt, and bury the recollection of of it in his grave; for this purpose he had framed a confession of the most delicate nature, in which the youth's title was fully acknowledged, as heir to Robert, eldest son to the late Lord, and the with-holding the estate and dignity, attributed to ambition, and the violation of wardship, not to the deadly crimes which had been used to obtain them.

To this was added a clauſe of an immediate and total ſurrender to the juſt heir; on condition of which, the profits of the eſtate were not to be accounted for, and the appropriation overlooked.

Having read it to de Mowbray, he inſtantly accorded to their wiſh, and with tears of gratitude to the conſiderate Knight, affixed his ſeal to it;—the act was witneſſed by Sir Bertram, and de Clifford, while Albert, ſaluted by the party, was hailed as Lord of Mowbray.

Overcome by the ſcene juſt tranſacted, the melancholy victim of miſguided ambition, requeſted a moment's repoſe, adding as they departed—"I feel

"I feel my mind more tranquil;—a weight of guilt has vaniſhed:—within an hour I will (faſt as my languid ſtrength permits) relate my dreadful tale, then look for death!—'tis not far diſtant—there ſhall I reſt;—reſt!—Ha!—will it bury all?—ſtill the deep ſtings of conſcience?—let me not think!—leave me my friends—*now* my beſt friends, who have taught me ere too late, to know myſelf, and expiate my crimes!"

So ſaying, he ſunk on the bed, and they retired;—Sir Bertram and de Clifford with Hubert, into a ſeparate apartment, and Albert, agitated and perplexed, to ſeek for the object of his affections, who ignorant of his ſafety, and equally ſo of his being at

the caſtle, had wandered into the grove in order to indulge that melancholy which led her to fly ſociety, not from diſguſt, but the pleaſure ſhe found in her own ſolitary thoughts.

Albert, certain of nothing but the ſudden change in his affairs, which yet to him was a compleat myſtery (Sir Bertram having been totally ſilent on the ſubject, and alſo enjoined Hubert to the ſame, deeming it a neceſſary precaution, as he dreaded the impetuoſity of the youth might hurry him on to ſome precipitate act, the reſult of which would be ruin, or at leaſt a prolongation of his dependant and dangerous ſtate) was however determined to ſeek for Mary, in order to eaſe her boſom of that ſolicitude, which

from

from her uncertainty of his ſituation, (judging by the tender feelings of his own heart) he naturally conceived ſhe muſt ſuffer; and alſo to acquaint her with his elevation, in his eyes alone deſirable, as it gave him a privilege to claim her hand.

From de Mowbray, he had always found the moſt tender attention, and even at his own expenſe, found his breaſt ſwell with earneſt ſorrow at his downfal; yet amidſt the melancholy of his mind, one idea ſtill brightened the ſcene, without which, fortune, in his fancy, had been vain, and only to be accepted as it conduced to the accompliſhment of it.

On this thought then he dwelt with pleaſure, and in an ecſtacy exclaimed—

"Yes, one at leaſt, ſhall never taſte the cup of ſorrow, and my loved Mary 'ſcape her parent's ruin!"

With theſe reflections, he flew to her chamber, but not finding her there, caſt his eyes towards the grove, thro' a window of the gallery, and ſoon diſcovered her, with penſive ſteps, ſlowly wandering among the trees.

With haſty ſtrides he joined her, and after the firſt impulſe of joyful ſurpriſe at his ſo ſudden and unexpected appearance, had ſubſided, he related to her the cauſe of his abſence, and concluded with the change of his ſituation, adding in a tone of ecſtacy

(forgetful of the deep intereſt the object he addreſſed felt in his narration)——

"No longer now can fortune be a bar to my felicity!—the humble Albert boaſts a noble line!—the orphan is acknowledged, the heir reſtored, and without a fear may, from de Mowbray, claim his daughter's hand!"

Amazed, confounded, and miſerable, Mary could not reply; the agitation of her mind, and confuſed tranſition of her thoughts, precluded ſpeech, and ere ſhe could ſufficiently tranquillize herſelf to collect her wandering ideas, Sir Reginald ruſhed from a thicket, and ſnatching her hand from the graſp of the aſtoniſhed youth, exclaimed, while

while fury almoſt choaked his utterance, and frantic frenzy glared from his blood-ſhot eye——

"Wretch!—hence—nor dare profane, by thy contagious touch, the offspring of de Mowbray!"

Then turning to the trembling Mary, he added, with looks of blazing anger——

"Degenerate girl!—wouldſt herd with the robber of thy ruined race, and fold within thy arms the viper that deſtroys thee?—but hold, we yet may triumph!—our cauſe is not ſo low, nor we ſo loſt, but retribution may again be found—then tremble at a parent's curſe!—a brother's vengeance!"—

So ſaying, with a boiſterous arm he daſhed her from him, and with a wild diſordered ſtep, hurried away into the deepeſt covert of the grove.

As he left her, had not Albert caught her in his arms, ſhe muſt have fallen to the ground;—he gently ſupported her, and was preparing to ſooth the tumult of her ſpirits to peace, when a domeſtic of Sir Bertram's (who had been ſometime ſeeking him) gave him information that his preſence was immediately required in de Mowbray's chamber, where his friends were aſſembled.

The ſummons was unwelcome;—at that moment he would have forgone titles and ſplendour—forgot the injuries he had ſuſtained, and have once more

deſcended

deſcended to the dependant orphan, Albert, could he have reſtored tranquillity to the unhappy Mary.

But ſeeing that nothing in her preſent agitated ſtate could make any impreſſion, or leave any durable effect, he ſupported her into the caſtle, and conſigning her to the female domeſtics, (who conducted her to her chamber) joined his friends in that of de Mowbray's.

After a ſhort time of reſt, from which ſlumber was baniſhed, finding himſelf evidently approaching the cloſe of life, and willing to render every mark of contrition his ſtate would admit, he had, before the appointed time, ſent for Sir Bertram, in order to unveil to him the cauſes that actuated

him to the uſurpation he had committed, and the many crimes which formed the links of his ambition.

He would willingly have confided them ſolely to the ear of the Knight, but he cautiouſly determined (avoiding all poſſibility of future doubt) to hear nothing but what might hereafter (if neceſſary) be corroborated by evidence, tho' at the ſame time, unleſs that neceſſity did arrive, be for ever preſerved in profound ſecrecy.

For this reaſon (de Mowbray conſenting) Albert was ſummoned to hear the elucidation of his own birth, and myſterious fortunes;—Hubert to authenticate the narration, if required, and de Clifford to bear teſtimony to his words.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

BEING all assembled, and seated round the sick mans' bed, with a feeble and tremulous voice, he thus addressed the Knight——

"My moments, Sir Bertram, are few, and gladly would I have them terminate without a pang; but, ah,

that cannot—conſcience!—that ſilent —dreadful monitor, beats high within my boſom!—I cannot ſcreen my guilt, and tho' the recollection drives me almoſt to madneſs, ſtill muſt I—in expiation, trace o'er my errors—then hope for Mercy."

"Fear not," ſaid Sir Bertram, "you may have many years of life, and penitence ſtill left to blot out thy offences, and appeaſe inſulted heaven."

"Heaven!" replied de Mowbray, "alas! my friend, till this dread hour my thoughts were fixed on earth;—an angry God!—an awful eternity, ne'er employed *my* mind!—Man, and the pomps of life alone engroſſed it;—but now—yes, now, I feel there is a Providence!—a judge—oh, Bertram! am I prepared?—is *my* account ſo clear,

clear, that it can ſtand the ſcrutiny of impartial offended juſtice?—Alas!—but let me collect my ſcattered reaſon, and trace with contrite pangs my ſanguine guilt!

"My errors were not without a cauſe—but, ah! that cauſe, how feeble an excuſe—envy of a father's love—a brother's fortune.

"From our earlieſt infancy, my father's predilection for my brother Robert was evident;—I ſhared none of thoſe endearments which ſo laviſhly he beſtowed on him, and tho' deficient in none of the conveniencies or luxuries of life, ſtill I wanted that, which could render them pleaſing—a parent's ſmile.

"In vain I ſought to excite it—my ſolicitations were rejected, my careſſes

ſpurned,

ſpurned, and myſelf treated with marked neglect;—this, in my infantile days, created that envy which is inſeparable from the childiſh boſom, and which, if not fixed by continued cauſe, ſeldom has any baleful effect, but where it gains root, and conſtant force by repeated diſtinction, it can only terminate in the miſery of its unhappy poſſeſſor.

"Such was my fate;—I do not think that nature marked me out for murder, or that the beneficence of righteous Providence, had doomed me to diſtinguiſhed guilt;—but what I might have been was perverted by my firſt principles, and a father's unreaſonable partiality;—I ſay unreaſonable, becauſe there was but a year between my brother and myſelf; together we liſped at his knee, and cer-

tainly he could not from the blank of our minds, at that early period, diſcover which was moſt worthy of his parental tenderneſs; however, to Robert it was given, and the conſequence was, envy in my boſom;—years but added to its force, and when reaſon firſt taught me to comment on my ſtate, and draw diſtinctions, the puerile affection was ripened to a ſtronger power, and terminated in a rooted hatred to my brother.

"From this may I date my miſery—the complicated ſorrow of my family—but alas! how unjuſt was I to Robert—he returned my hatred with kindneſs, my ſcorn with friendſhip;—the fault was not his—unſolicited he gained a parent's love, and it tore my boſom to ſee an unrequeſted tender-

neſs

neſs laviſhed on him, while all my cares to acquire it, were treated with frigid contempt.

"I pined—I wept—and at length determined to deſtroy;—reſolutions taken from rooted principles are ſeldom eaſily abandoned, and reflection, which moſt commonly perverts, and changes thoſe which are fraught with danger, ſerves only to fix thoſe firmer;—mine acquired ſtrength from time, and a compariſon increaſed its fury.

"I curſed a parent's miſguided love—I raged at a brother's ſucceſsful years;—I was the outcaſt, the victim of diſpleaſure, the ſport of capricious fortune!

"What might have been a mother's affections I cannot tell, as ſoon after my birth ſhe died, yet in the anguiſh of

of my ſoul, I did not fail to aſcribe to her the ſame partialities as my father exhibited, and almoſt polluted her grave with curſes!

"No longer able to endure the torment of my ſoul, I determined to revenge my inſult—but heſitated on the means:—my firſt idea was, at once to deſtroy the parent whoſe unjuſt partiality imbittered every painful moment of life; but ere the reſolution was formed——I pauſed;—it was not remorſe that checked the thought, it was unſatisfied revenge—I wiſhed to wound him deeper, even in the minion of his love!

"The thought pleaſed me—I laughed over his premeditated pangs, and Robert's death was decreed.

"All

"All are not virtuous—let your projected enormity by ever ſo great, you will ſtill find abettors of the guilt; without difficulty I found congenial ſpirits to my own among my father's vaſſels, who allured by my promiſes, and the diſtant proſpect of reward, readily joined in my black deſigns.

"The idea once taken, was torment to its projector till its accompliſhment; at length the time arrived, when ſeparated from his companions in the chaſe, I (who had excuſed myſelf to him, but privately hung on his ſteps) attended by four deſperadoes, and diſguiſed, ſuddenly ruſhed on him from the foreſt, and diſpatching his domeſtic, as for ſuccour he fled to your father's caſtle, left him alſo for dead; when the noiſe of combat, and his cries for

aſſiſtance,

aſſiſtance, compelled us to abandon our victim, and fly from the purſuit of your ſervants, who followed us in vain.

"Tho' not abſolutely certain, ſtill we conjectured his death almoſt inevitable, and accordingly returned home without ſuſpicion, anxiouſly expecting the moment when rumour would confirm our hopes, and give my thirſty ſoul the triumph of his blood.

"That time did not arrive—he was reſcued from the grave, and ſoon after his tolerable recovery, returned home, where his recent danger did but endear him to his doating father, and rouſe to ungoverned madneſs the ſcorpion ſting that feſtered in my heart.

"I viewed him with malignant glances, and curſed my wretched ſtate;—my projected ill had recoiled

coiled upon myſelf, and where I thought to ruin, had raiſed the object of my vengeance:—with difficulty could I reſtrain my impatient hand, that almoſt graſped my dagger to ſtab him before the world; when a new, and unexpected cauſe, changed my puplic hatred to deep and plotting craft—my deſperate, and open deſigns, to a private, tho' not leſs certain ruin;—in ſhort, I determined that he ſhould live.

" The cauſe of this alteration in my ſentiments, was as certain, as ſudden:—you know the continued, the hereditary enmity of our families;—the name of your's was death to my father's ears, and Robert loved your ſiſter Gertrude.

" Un-

"Unſuſpectingly he confided his hopeleſs paſſion to my boſom;—his words were muſic to my ears—he ſpoke his own deſtruction, and on the inſtant I doomed him to lingering miſery—to a life of poverty, and a parent's curſe!

"And what," I cried to him, "as the thought was formed, "and what ſhould hinder the completion of your wiſhes?"

"The dread of my father's fury—he hates Sir Bertram."

"But does Sir Bertram yield?"

"There too I am loſt—his vengeance is as fierce."

"Here I pauſed, and after ſome time, as if deliberating, exclaimed——

"Wed her!"

"Never!" he anſwered, "lead the loved maid to miſery."

"What," I added, in an ironical tone, "you a lover, and ſtart at trivial difficulties!—again I repeated it—*Wed her!*—old men are not immortal, our father cannot live for ever, and till his death your marriage can be concealed.

"But then, Sir Bertram?"——

"Will not refuſe conſent, when to deny cannot undo the deed."

"Young minds imagine in the volatility of heart, all things poſſible; Robert was convinced, and I triumphed over his eaſy nature.

"At this time, my father, who ever conſidered me as a burden that he gladly would get rid of, propoſed to me

me a union with Sir William Beauclere, by a marriage with his eldeſt daughter.

"Beauclere was not rich, the only dowry therefore he could give was this caſtle, and its ſmall domain, then almoſt in ruins, and my father not conſidering me as worthy his peculiar regards, as an equivalent, beſtowed on me but a ſcanty portion; which however, as my thoughts were turned to deeper ſchemes, and hopes of regaining my father's affection, thro' Robert's ruin, I did not refuſe, and accordingly the marriage was ſolemnized, and I permitted to remain with him until this caſtle was prepared for my reception.

"During this time, I was not idle with my unſuſpecting brother, I urged his inclination, already combating in

my favour, and at length accompliſhed my deſigns.

"After hanging about your father's gate for ſeveral days, he at length found means to convey a letter to Gertrude, thro' the corruption of a ſervant whom we bribed;—ſhe heſitated—he preſſed, and at laſt, with the willingneſs of ardent love, which foreſees no obſtacles to happineſs, the timid maid conſented.

"The ſucceeding midnight, thro' the means of the ſame domeſtic, ſhe eloped, and that night, by a ſubſervient prieſt, was united to the enraptured Robert.

"My firſt idea was, immediately to fly to my father, and acquaint him with the affront my brother offered to his hatred,—but good heavens! how altered

altered were my ſentiments when I beheld the bluſhing, trembling Gertrude;—her glowing cheeks heightened by apprehenſion—her boſom palpitating with unknown ſenſations, and every charm increaſed by modeſty!—I forgot my fierceneſs—I ſaw—I admired!—I adored!——

"My brother was no longer my enemy;—I forgave a parent's injuſtice, and thanked the fate that thus had pointed out to me new ſcenes of felicity.

"Such were the firſt ruſh of my reflections;—the next morning called me to the altar to receive the hand of Julia Beauclere;—I did ſo, and with my thoughts filled with the lovely Gertrude, plighted the ſolemn vows.

"My conduct now took a new, and total turn, for tho' a little thought reſtored to me my accuſtomed hatred, I loved my brother's wife!—I folded Julia in my arms—but Gertrude in my heart;—I no longer intended to make the union known—on the contrary, uſed every art to guard its ſecrecy, and procured a ſmall retired cottage, where the lovely recluſe remained unknown, viſited ſolely by her huſband and myſelf, and attended by a ſingle female.

"I was now conſtant in my attention to Robert, and taught him to believe I was the only perſon on whom he could ſecurely rely—till—but before I proceed let me remark to you, that among my adherents, Hubert was the moſt faithful and ſtrenuous;—he attended

attended me when my brother's aſſaſſination was intended, and to his fruitful invention ſince, have my ſchemes acquired ſecurity."

As he ſpoke, they turned their eyes on the old man, who hung down his head with ſhame, and the conviction of conſcious guilt, while de Mowbray thus proceeded——

"He was witneſs to the private union of Robert, and can alone bear teſtimony to it, as the prieſt has long ſince paid the debt of nature;—but to conclude my melancholy tale—'tis yet unſtained with actual murder—the fatal time draws on.

"I adored the lovely Gertrude—but convinced, while her huſband was preſent to her view, I never could

accompliſh my purpoſe, I once more reſolved his death, and what was before intended to gratify revenge and hatred, was now made ſubſervient to paſſion.

" Hubert was the tool of my deſigns, his genius was inventive, and I was prompt to act;—at length it was reſolved, that my adherents ſhould be called, who attacking us in the foreſt, would vent their vengeance on my brother, and I ſhould be ſafe from the voice of calumny.

" The day was appointed;—I led him from the road into the wood, where Hubert and his fellows lay in ambuſh; they immediately charged us—I fled, and he fell beneath their ſwords to riſe no more.

" My

"My firſt care was to hurry to the unhappy Gertrude, and inform her that her huſband had been compelled to attend the king into Scotland, he having called on his vaſſels, and my father, who held immediately from the crown, being from illneſs unable to comply, had been permitted to ſubſtitute my brother in his ſtead; that finding from the hurry and preparation of the moment, it would be (without creating ſuſpicion) impoſſible for him to ſee her before his departure, he had requeſted me to inform her of his haſty journey.

"At my information, a tear ſtole down her cheek, which ſhe ſuddenly checked, when I remarked, it was his duty, and that the limits of the abſence could not exceed forty days.

"Till

"Till then, I added, let not melancholy ſteal on your hours, all my endeavours ſhall be to render the interval leſs tedious.

"Gertrude was tranquillized, and I triumphed in a brother's blood;—I had conceived that the extent of my guilt would not exceed its preſent boundaries — fooliſh thought! — we know not the magnitude of our own wiſhes till our ability to accompliſh them is tried;—I had intended guilt unperformed as the inſtrument of hatred—it turned out the furtherance of paſſion, and now elevated my mind to boundleſs ambition.

"The progreſs of virtue is ſlow and painful, but its reward is a tranquil heart, and felicity;—the firſt ſtep of guilt o'erleaps all barriers, and its com-

commencement is (as its gradations are ſhort and rapid) but the completion of enormity;—ſucceſsful in one enterpriſe, we grow bold, and plunge at once into a ſea of error!

"My brother's death being mourned, and all again tranquil, I began to reflect on my deed, and found myſelf the heir of de Mowbray; this however was not certain—I was not a favourite with my father—nor did Robert's removal ſeem to advance me in his affections; on the contrary, recollection of his departed favourite did not fail to create compariſons, and increaſe his (now ſo juſt) hatred;—from this I feared that my ſucceſſion might be thwarted, and my father, before his death, ſurrender his fee to his liege

liege Lord, in excluſion of a ſon ſo little regarded.

"This reflection agitated my boſom, and as from the privacy of Gertrude, and her conſequent ignorance of Robert's real fate, I was ſecure of her, I turned my thoughts ſolely to the accompliſhment of my future fortune.

"A little deliberation was neceſſary to fix my reſolution;—my hands were already ſtained with blood—a guiltleſs brother's blood!—'twas but a little more, and all was certain;—guilt knows no bounds!—the ſudden ſhock of Robert's death had been too much for his declining years—a tranſient illneſs followed, and in his drink I infuſed a powerful poiſon;—to be more certain of ſecurity—I tendered him

him the cup myſelf—he drank the ingredients—and in an hour expired.

" Suſpicion did not point at me;—my grief was clamorous, and my filial piety praiſed; however, I did not neglect the chief point, but the moment that decency would allow, I haſtened to court, tendered the relief, and did homage for my tenure.

" It is needleſs to ſay that I carefully concealed my brother's marriage, and more ſo, that he had an heir to his inheritance.

" A month before his aſſaſſination, Gertrude bleſſed him with a ſon, and a few days after, Julia preſented me with Reginald;—I was at that time ſtill an inhabitant of my father's caſtle, my own, from its ruinous ſtate, not being yet in a habitable condition.

" You

"You may here wonder at my boldneſs, in poſſeſſing myſelf of the property as of my own right, when I might have reaſonably expected the wardſhip of the heir, which from his tender age, and conſequent length of my holding, might have ſatisfied my ambition; but the caſe would have been directly the reverſe; our late king had but juſt mounted the throne, his brother Robert, Duke of Normandy, diſputed his title, but without ſucceſs;—bold and crafty, he ſurmounted all difficulties, and gained an uninterrupted ſway;—to his other qualities he added avarice, and had he known that an heir exiſted under age, whoſe claim preceded mine, he would, as head Lord, have ſeized the wardſhip,

ſhip, and I have been turned from Mowbray Caſtle, a beggar.

"This may be an excuſe for conſequent uſurpation, but not for primitive ill;—I am guilty—and do not ſeek to palliate.

"Still warmed with a paſſion for the lovely Gertrude, and finding (now that I had ſecured a temporary title, which I was reſolved to make permanent) it was no longer neceſſary to keep on the maſk;—on the day of her huſband's expected return, I openly made known his death, concealing by whoſe inſtigation he fell.

"But here let me pauſe—words are too weak to paint her anguiſh—I ſee her ſilent and ghaſtly horror during the dreadful narration!—not a tear diſtained her cheek—not a ſigh burſt

from

from her boſom, an awful calm of frigid deſpair numbed every feeling of her ſoul; till, as my words concluded, ſhe uttered a piercing ſhriek, and fell lifeleſs to the ground.

" Foreſeeing what would happen, and determined no longer to be expoſed to the danger of detection by her appearance in the world, I reſolved to convey her to my own caſtle, and there to confine her ſubſervient to two purpoſes—ſecurity, and the accompliſhment of my baſe deſigns.

" The weſtern wing had ſeldom been viſited, and never inhabited by the family, a fooliſh report being circulated of its having been haunted; this anſwered my purpoſe well, and by the aſſiſtance of Hubert (my confident and abettor) prepared a ſmall chamber

chamber at the extremity of the weſtern gallery for my devoted victim.

" As we worked in our performance ſolely at night, the noiſe we made confirmed the idea of a ſupernatural viſitation, and to the wonderous tales of the morning (as they anſwered my purpoſe) I ſeemed to give implicit faith, in order to increaſe terror and prevent prying curioſity.

" This then was the ſituation of affairs when the unhappy Gertrude fell lifeleſs at my feet—Hubert, with my other adherents, waited at a diſtance; —now was my moment to act, and enſure an uninterrupted title;—the infant heir lay in the cradle, and the female domeſtic, who (tho' ignorant of its quality) was the only witneſs of its birth, hung over it to calm its

infantile complaints:—blood was familiar to me—I caught her by the arm (the thought was momentary) and dragging her into another room, plunged my poniard into her breaſt, reſolving to bury her information in the grave.

"Such is the fate of guilt, one crime cannot ſupport itſelf, and many follow to uphold the dreadful pile;—ſhe was innocent, and might for ever have remained harmleſs; but there was a doubt, and that doubt, till removed, eternal torment, the dagger impoſed ſilence, and ſhe was doomed to bleed!

"Having diſpatched her with a number of wounds, I called in my followers, and ſnatching the infant from the cradle, put it into the hands of Hubert, ſaying, 'you know your duty,'

duty,' he bowed, and immediately conveyed it away.

" I then commanded the others to raiſe the inanimate Gertrude, and conducting them to my caſtle, by a private door, entered unobſerved, and had her carried to the appointed chamber.

" After ſome time, ſhe recovered—but to what?—to miſery!—to anguiſh!—to deſpair!—with frantic looks ſhe caſt her eyes around—called for her huſband—for her child, her Albert, and in piercing ſhrieks made known the anguiſh of her heart;—in vain did I endeavour to calm her ſpirits, and ſooth her into peace—her ſorrow was loud and poignant!

" But let me hurry over the dreadful recital—the recollection tears my

ſoul with horror. Hubert ſoon returned, and informed me all was ſafe; —then did I throw aſide reſtraint, and appear to Gertrude in my true colours; —confeſſed my guilt, and made her acquainted with my deſign.

With dignified ſorrow ſhe heard me glory in my crimes; yet by an irreſiſtible ſomething, ſtill awed me from my purpoſe; — the glance of virtue has that pre-eminence which commands where words would fail, and Gertrude's look had more effect than an angel's eloquence—I ſhrunk from her radient eye, and honour triumphed!

" Finding that I could not, or more properly, that I dared not accompliſh my purpoſes, I grew penſive and melancholy;—reflection—an enemy I had

had never before admitted, now haunted me, and Mowbray Caſtle became too dreadful an abode to reſide in;—the chamber in which my father died, I never entered, and finally ordered it to be nailed up; every apartment was equally horrid, all ſeemed to reproach me, all to proclaim my crimes, and the blood of the guiltleſs Robert called loud for vengeance:—I could not bear my own ſociety a moment, and the approach of night ſeemed to me as the hour of death—oh, Conſcience!—Conſcience! how deep were then thy ſtings!

"Unable longer to bear the horror of my ſtate, I determined, as my other caſtle was now fit to inhabit, to fly from Mowbray, in hopes that the change of ſcene, would be ſome alle-

viation to my tormented ſoul; but then the injured Gertrude; I was already gorged with blood, and recoiled from her murder, and to permit her, acquainted with my guilt, to regain her freedom, was equally impoſſible.

"At length I determined to leave her a priſoner in her chamber, with Hubert, my faithful attendant, as a temporary domeſtic, and accordingly departed from Mowbray Caſtle.

"For ſome time the change of ſcene, and buſtle of the moment diverting my thoughts, gave me a temporary forgetfulneſs of my enormities; but, ah! it was a tranſient eaſe—reflection, in the firſt pauſe from occupation, reſtored them with double force, and tortured me to madneſs.

"Then

"Then would I have reſigned all pomp and ſplendour to regain my priſtine innocence and purity;—but no—it could not be, and I was doomed to miſery!

"A deep and ſettled melancholy took poſſeſſion of my ſoul, while frequently to Hubert I lamented my dreadful ſtate, and wiſhed with a true and penitent fervour, that I could recall paſt time, and guiltleſs infancy.

"One day ſeeing me particularly ſad, he informed me that perhaps, in part, he could allay the anguiſh of my boſom—I ſhook my head, and bade him leave me; he did ſo—but in a ſhort time returning, preſented to me a child of about three years old, ſaying, as he led it in——

"Behold Albert! the ſon of Robert!"

"I ſtarted at the name, and tho' alive to penitence, I was more ſo to danger;—the conſequence flaſhed at once upon my ſoul, and in a ſtern voice, I demanded, "why he breathed!"

"Yes!" cried Hubert, ſtepping forward with an air of exultation, "you did ſo—and what was my reply?—that I could ſtab a man, but the ſmiles of the innocent, harmleſs babe—that—no that, I could not do!—I ſaved it, and keeping it concealed at that moment, reſtored it to notice, and now to fortune!"

"Peace!" ſaid Sir Bertram, hardly able to articulate thro' grief and horror.

The

The old man bowed and retired to his ſeat, while de Mowbray thus proceeded——

"The appearance of the infant, immediately excited the idea of danger, and diſpelled every doubt of future guilt that harboured at my heart;—ſecurity alone brought repentance;—the poſſibility of ruin prompted me to avoid it, and a ſhort deliberation concluded in the reſolution, that of the mother and child, one muſt die, and which was ſoon determined.

"The infant, Albert, was ignorant of every tranſaction; as an orphan dependant on my bounty he might be reared, and never know his wrongs; but Gertrude:——in ſhort, Hubert concurring with me in opinion, her doom was fixed;—and as I had ſometimes,

times, during three years of abſence from Mowbray Caſtle, viſited it, my going there now would not be attributed to any thing more than mere curioſity, ſo that appointing the next day to meet him there, we parted.

"Arriving at the caſtle, I left my ſervants without the court, and advancing to the hall, found my truſty aſſiſtant already there;—'twas but the day before, he had brought the captive proviſions, at which time, he ſaid, he had found her weeping over ſome letters ſhe had received from Robert;—I ſmiled—thoſe letters ſhe had received during his ſuppoſed campaign in Scotland, I had penned them, and did not fail to ſpeak well of myſelf, in order to prepoſſeſs her in my favour.

"Having

"Having informed Hubert of this, we aſcended the ſtaircaſe, and proceeded to the weſtern wing; but ere we reached the chamber, a damp ſtruck on my heart, and forbade my participating in the guilt;—I ordered him to advance and perpetrate the deed;—without heſitation he complied, and unbolting the door——

"Stop!" cried Sir Bertram, ſtarting from his chair, "I can hear no more—my ſoul is ſick with horror!"

So ſaying, he ruſhed from the chamber; Albert was fixed to his ſeat with ſilent anguiſh, he would have riſen, but his limbs refuſed their office, he would have forbidden the continuation, but ſpeech was denied;—his eyes floated in tears, and the only

perfect

perfect faculty he poſſeſſed was hearing, by which he received the dreadful narration. De Clifford was in almoſt a ſimilar ſituation, and de Mowbray hearing no objection ſtarted to his continuation, thus proceeded——

"He opened the door and entered, when almoſt inſtantly I heard a ſhriek, which was ſucceeded by a momentary ſilence;—conceiving the act perpetrated I advanced to the chamber, but found that Gertrude, perceiving his intention, had caught his arm, and prevented the intended blow.

"The wildneſs of her looks weakened his ſtrength—he ſtood motionleſs and pale—while with diſhevelled locks, and eyes of ſteadfaſt horror, ſhe held his nerveleſs arm, and faſcinated him to inactivity.

"Fearful

"Fearful of ſharing his fate, and determined to accompliſh my deſign, I ruſhed forward, and drawing my ſword made a violent blow at her head, which ſhe perceiving, looſed her hold, and caught it on her wriſt—the hand dropped to the ground—while at the ſame inſtant, Hubert, freed from her ardent glance, plunged his ſword into her boſom—ſhe fell—caſt on me a mild complaining eye, and with a deep drawn ſigh—expired!

"A cold terror ſeized my frame—I gazed upon the bleeding body in ſilence;—the hand had fallen under the table;—on one of the fingers was that fatal ring;—it had been the gift of her murdered huſband (Albert unconſciouſly raiſed it to his lips) I would have taken it thence, but could

not

not—an awful terror prevented me—and giving orders to Hubert to dispose of the body, instantly departed; and having desired one of my servants to close the gates on the inside, and descend from the walls, departed never to return."

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

OVERCOME with the fatigue and painful recollection, he could proceed no farther in his narration, which Hubert perceiving, advanced, and thus continued——

"Left to myself in the solitary castle, a cold fear, which till that moment

moment I had ſeldom felt, and never in an equal degree ſeized on my whole frame;—I would have fled, but could not, a ſuperior power fixed me to the ſpot;—I hung over the bleeding body with haggard looks—the fatal ſword dropped from my nerveleſs hand, and tears (the firſt I had ever ſhed, and then not tears of anguiſh) flowed unconſciouſly from my burning eye;—I was loſt to the world—to myſelf—to all but conſcience! that cut my ſoul, and tortured me to madneſs!—

"How long I remained in this ſituation I know not—for ſuddenly ſtarting I caſt my timid glances on the ſanguine ſcene, and catching the murdered Gertrude with an arm of frenzy, I dragged her from the chamber, cloſing the door after me, and proceeded

ceeded down the gallery to the ſtair-caſe, which I deſcended, and raiſing a trap at the bottom of the ſteps, caſt the body into the vault beneath, following it myſelf, and placed it in an old oak cheſt which had been the receptacle of decayed armour.

"Having ſecured the lid with nails, and regained the hall, I remembered that I had left my ſword in the room above, and alſo thought on the ring;—I would willingly have poſſeſſed it—but an empire would not have bribed me to return;—I ſeemed to have eſcaped from the graſp of death, and precipitately fled from the caſtle.

De Mowbray, a little rouſed by this temporary ſenſation, again prepared to

continue his fatal tale, and waving his hand to Hubert, proceeded——

"I might now naturally be ſuppoſed, that freed from every apparent danger, my ſanguinary ſoul would reſt from blood—but no — Albert yet lived!—the ſon of Robert lived, and tho' much was not to be dreaded from him, ſtill there was a doubt.

"After the birth of my daughter Mary, my wife died. Julia had never been loved, ſhe was the object of neceſſity—of a father's caprice, and therefore was not lamented.

"In the mean time, Albert was reared with Reginald, and treated with every kindneſs that could wed him to my intereſt;—indeed I had determined to make ſome recompenſe for his wrongs by an independance—when—

ſure

ſure heaven had willed it ſo, to accompliſh its own good purpoſes—I diſcloſed to my ſon the ſecret of the orphan's birth.

"An inſtant change took poſſeſſion of Reginald's heart, and tho' for twenty years Albert ſhared the affections of a brother, that moment choaked them all;—he grew thoughtful, and at length melancholy, the cauſe of which he at length declared to me, ſaying——

"That while the viper lived, the ſting was to be dreaded!"

"In vain did I endeavour to convince him of the improbability that ever he could know the truth, and conſequent impoſſibility of danger; the more he deliberated, the more he trembled, and at length induced me to conſent

to Albert's death—'twas but one more, and the dread chain was forged.

"To the many reaſons that operated on the ſoul of Reginald, the bold enterprizing ſpirit of our victim did not a little contribute, and the reflection that thoſe yet lived who had aſſiſted my crimes, and who might ſometime, perhaps, unknowingly, or incautiouſly divulge the horrid ſecret: from themſelves we feared nothing—their participation in the guilt was a ſufficient ſecurity for ſilence—but while *one* lived, whoſe intereſt was ſo nearly concerned, the ſtings of conſcience, and the remorſe of a death bed!—My ſon prevailed, and Albert was marked for ruin.

The ſucceſsful method uſed againſt my brother, was now adopted as the

fureſt one to deſtroy his offspring;—Reginald entreated his attendance on a pretended viſit to his kinſman, Lord Donald Douglaſs, within the Scottiſh borders, and having obtained his wiſh, led him forth unconſciouſly to death.

"My old aſſiſtants were called, and determined to make ſecurity certain, I reſolved to lead them on myſelf. On the edge of the foreſt which ſurrounds the moor of Mowbray, we overtook our victim, and without the leaſt doubt of ſucceſs, attacked him;—Reginald fled—but the reſult I need not dwell on, 'tis already known to you—one thing alone you are ſtill ignorant of—a great revenge!——

"Yes, Albert, you have revenged your father's murder, and by thy hand I die!—thy laſt blow in the hall of

Mowbray pierced my breaſt;—I fell, and was immediately conveyed away;—the attention paid to me prevented your purſuit, and the road was inſtantly taken to my caſtle, where my illneſs was attributed to a fall from my horſe, and the delay, to the tedious and neceſſary ſlowneſs of my journey.

"Reginald, informed of your ſafety, and not doubting but you had remained all night at Mowbray, reſolved that you ſhould not eſcape, and without delay reconducted the party to the ſkirts of the foreſt, whither they arrived at the dawn, and took their ſtation within the wood, to avoid attracting notice, or prevent your falling on their ſwords.

"The reſult you know, two of the party were wounded, and my ſon, with

with Hubert, escaped, during the pursuit of whom, the others effected their security, taking separate ways to procure safety;—Hubert arrived before Reginald, and had just time to inform me of their ill success, when you and Sir Bertram entered the castle. Some time after Reginald appeared, unattended, but as his followers were vassals, it was not remarked, they having been supposed to return home, and no consequent suspicion was created.

"Thus did our schemes recoil upon ourselves, and disappointment but increased the appetite for slaughter, which however, we knew not how privately to gratify—till Hubert——"

"Yes, sir!" cried the old man, starting from his seat, and coming

forward, "it was I that inſtigated the viſit to Mowbray Caſtle!

Albert looked on him with aſtoniſhment, and he thus proceeded——

"Hear me, ſir, nor form a judgment without proof;—aſk not the reaſon that impelled the change in my ſentiments and actions—I know it not—it was an impulſe of the Deity—the means of heaven to forward its deſigns, and mocks inquiry to diſcover.—I who but a few preceding hours ſought to deſtroy, now with more eagerneſs reſolved to ſave.—I was deemed faithful, and of all perhaps, alone poſſeſſed the means to ward aſide the bolt of ruin.

"But to inſure this, it was neceſſary to continue the appearance of integrity, and accordingly I did not fail to mingle

mingle in the meetings Reginald held for the accompliſhment of a double ſcheme—the death of Albert, and ſpeedy acquiſition of his diſtant fortune!"——

De Mowbray ſtarted at theſe words, and Hubert addreſſing himſelf to him, thus added——

"Yes, ſir, not content with ſafety, he panted to enjoy *entire* poſſeſſion, and after the firſt blow was ſtruck, doomed your deſtruction.

"My father roſe by blood," he cried, "and cannot blame his ſon that emulates—'tis his reward!"

"But to advance this object, Albert muſt have been removed, and *this* I was reſolved to fruſtrate; many plans were propoſed, all of which muſt have proved

proved fatal, but mine adopted:—this was, to contrive means to ſend the youth to Mowbray Caſtle, where incautious, unprotected, and far from aid, he could not fail of becoming the victim of our ſanguinary meaſures.

"How this was effected I need not repeat, but my reaſons may not be unneceſſary.

"Had any other propoſition been followed, I could only have been a witneſs to his ruin; but here I reſolved to ſeek him before the hour of premeditated attack, and informing him of his danger, fly with him from the power of his enemies to ſome ſecure retreat, until the moment of unveiling his birth arrived, while fearful leaſt ſome unforeſeen accident ſhould (by turning the mind of Albert) fruſtrate

my intentions, I frequently warned him againſt the undertaking, in order to excite his courage the more to meet the danger, well knowing from his determined temper, that if once fixed, from that impulſe, nothing would be able to ſhake his reſolution.

"At length the time arrived; he ſought the caſtle, and——but how we were repulſed in our attack, you, ſir, (addreſſing de Clifford) can beſt relate; ſuffice it to ſay, that conſtantly by the ſide of Sir Reginald, I was prevented from putting my deſign in execution, of bidding him fly from the ſeat of ruin, and had determined to turn my ſword againſt his baſe aſſaſſins, and combat on his ſide:—this was needleſs —we were routed, and compelled to fly.

"Having

"Having gained the ſkirts of the foreſt, I began to imagine that Albert might ſtill be at the caſtle, and attributed the miſcarriage of our projected murder to its true cauſe—the fortuitous entrance of ſtrangers to Mowbray for the night, and being convinced that after the diſturbance they had met with, their continuance would not be long—I boldly offered to Sir Reginald, ſingly to return, and endeavour to rid him of his terror by my dagger.

"He conſented—my aſſiduous care for his intereſts was praiſed, and as he advanced thro' the wood;—I meaſured back the road we had fled over, tho', from what I have ſaid, with a far different motive than Sir Reginald conceived.

The

"The event juſtified my idea, and anſwered my moſt ardent expectations, the guilty have been convicted, and the injured reſtored!"——

Hubert would have proceeded, when de Clifford interrupted him, by informing de Mowbray of thoſe particular circumſtances which yet he was ignorant of, at the concluſion of which, with a ſervant look, he exclaimed——

"Heaven's ways are deep and juſt!—my guilt the means of my detection;—who's he can doubt Omnipotence?—here let him turn his eyes, and view the wreck of error—projected ill caught on its own ſword!"

As he ceaſed ſpeaking, Sir Bertram entered, and finding privacy no longer neceſſary

neceſſary to compleat his deſign, ſummoned the inhabitants of the caſtle to the chamber, before whom he exhibited de Mowbray's renunciation of the eſtate, and Albert was publicly acknowledged by the dying uſurper, the proper heir, and only ſurviving ſon of Robert.

All were aſtoniſhed and ſilent but Lord Wenlock, on hearing the unexpected article read; an inſtant fury flaſhed to his eye, and turning an angry look on the pale victim of ambition, he cried——

"And Harcourt has wedded the off-ſpring of uſurpation;—the baſe betrayer of a ſacred truſt;—No matter —the ſoul of Wenlock does not tamely bear an inſult, and will not

now

now—time—and not distant, shall bestow revenge!"

So saying, he rushed from the room, and ordering his equipage, forcibly conveyed the feeble Harcourt, and his languid wife from the castle, venting imprecations on de Mowbray and Albert; nor (tho' innocent) did he respect the trembling Jane, who was ignorant of the transaction.

The necessity of avoiding any suspicion of the real cause of his illness, had induced de Mowbray to exert himself beyond the power of his strength, on the marriage of his daughter, and at the imminent hazard, and almost certain destruction of his life, he had risen from his bed to the balcony;

balcony; added to this, the abſolute privacy with which his wound was concealed, prevented the proper remedies from being uſed, and nature was not ſufficient to operate without the aid of art.

A mortification had already formed, and now when medical advice could have been procured, it was too late;—the ſhocks he had received, and the weakneſs of his frame, precluded hope, and marked him for the grave;—he did not wiſh to live—and to the kind condoleance of his friends, replied——

"Why ſeek to prolong an exiſtance that is no longer deſirable?—no, rather pardon and forget my errors;—the tomb alone has reſt."

Then

Then requeſting a moment's privacy with Sir Bertram, he took his hand and ſaid——

"My friend, can you regard a wretch like me?—can you behold the ſinking pulſe of life nor load my parting ſpirit with a curſe?—oh, what a life of horror have I led, and now the hour of retribution comes:—falſe hopes, and thinking all things as I wiſhed, bade me reject the thought of an hereafter—but—no!—no!—I have no hopes of pardon."

"Do not prejudge," ſaid Sir Bertram, "or form the decrees of Providence. I cannot flatter you with the expectation of longer life.—Penitence alone is now your only reſource, and if 'twill clear your ſetting hour of a ſingle pang, to have my true forgiveneſs, take it; and may eternal juſtice at the laſt, ſpeak with as healing words."

"Oh, you have eaſed my heart!" cried de Mowbray," death has loſt half its terror. No, my friend, life cannot long endure. I feel its ebbing current flow to my freezing breaſt. A moment of reſt, and then for a wide eternity."

Sir Bertram retired, and as he paſſed thro' the gallery was met by Reginald, who pauſing for a moment, darted at him a vindictive look of fury, and inſtantly ruſhing paſt him, retired to his chamber.

The ſhades of night now inveſted the earth, and two domeſtics being left with de Mowbray, the inhabitants of the caſtle had for ſome time retired to reſt, when they were ſuddenly arouſed to attend the dying man, whoſe apart-

ment

ment was ſoon thronged by his friends, ſcarce in time to receive his parting breath.

For ſome time he was ſpeechleſs, and apparently dead;—it was but a ſuſpenſion of animation, and after a ſpace he recovered—but not to a hope of life—the mortification had infected the maſs of blood, and his moments were but few.

On opening his languid eyes, he caſt them on Albert, whom he inſtantly beckoned to his bed ſide, and thus addreſſed——

"Much injured youth, canſt thou forgive?—ah, no!—thou canſt not;—ſee this hand, 'tis red, red—no matter, thy arm avenged. What, a tear?—then thou doſt pity!"——

"And from my ſoul," forgive," cried Albert.

"Oh, this is too much!" exclaimed de Mowbray, "more than my burſting heart could hope—it ſmooths the paſſage to the grave—is there aught elſe!—my lamp of life expires—ſpeak quick—aught that my feeble means can give?"—

"Nothing but this," anſwered the youth, taking the hand of the trembling Mary, who drowned in tears could ſcarce ſupport her ſinking frame.

"Indeed!" cried de Mowbray, "then I have no more to look for—take her—and if the polluted wiſh of ſuch a wretch as I am can reach eternal grace, may heaven conſent unto the ſacred union, and ſhower its choiceſt bleſſings on you."

Albert

Albert was going to reply with thanks when de Mowbray ſunk down in a ſecond faint, which ſeemed to foretun his diſſolution; for ſome time he lay totally inſenſible, and when he recovered, reaſon had fled her ſeat;—he wandered in the moſt incoherent manner as long as ſpeech remained; the purport of which was only known to a few, but ſerved ſtrongly to ſhew the dreadful ſtate of his mind. He called frequently on Robert, and on Gertrude, and at length ſeeming to recover a lucid interval, with vehemence he exclaimed——

"Oh, pardon! — pardon! — and immediately relapſed into a ſhort inſenſibility, which could only be diſtinguiſhed from death, by a quick and difficult reſpiration.

The wretched Mary fainted into the arms of Albert, and was conveyed from the chamber, juſt time enough to ſpare her ſoul the horror of her parent's expiring moment, which rapidly approached; his breathing grew more difficult, and the convulſions of his face indicated the pangs he ſuffered, from which however, he was ſoon relieved by the hand of death.

A deep and dreadful groan marked the inſtant! and his heart ceaſed to throb!!!

The remainder of the night was paſſed in conſequent melancholy, and the ſucceeding day, at the requeſt of Albert, Mary permitted herſelf to be conducted by the youth to Bertram Caſtle.

Sir Bertram himſelf remained at de Mowbray's, in the expectation of ſeeing Sir Reginald, but in vain;—he obſtinately refuſed all intercourſe or converſation with him, which finding to be the caſe, and all attempts fruitleſs, he waited but for the interment of the body, and then, attended by de Clifford, returned home.

Hubert, tho' principally inſtrumental to the preſent happy termination of events, was yet too guilty to paſs unnoticed by the hand of puniſhment; but how to obtain that in the condign manner he deſerved, without branding the memory of de Mowbray, with that odium he ſo juſtly meritted, but they wiſhed to avoid, was what perplexed Sir Bertram; at length however, he overcame all ſcruples, and had reſolved

on his public condemnation, when his intentions were turned by the words of the old man himſelf.

"I do not wiſh to live, and yet I fear to die;—I have a load lies heavy at my heart, that calls for expiation. I aſk for being?—a moment of repentance!—give me ſeclusion from the world—a few ſhort years, to wipe away the ſtains that guilt has made—my ſcanty feeble hours are nothing to offended juſtice—but much!—much, to my trembling heart."

This anſwered every idea of the Knight's, he wanted only to prevent him from the poſſibility of future harm, and accordingly got him admitted as a branch of a ſevere, and ſtrict religious houſe, where the remainder of his days were paſſed in penitence, and prayer.

The

The next material ſtep, was the ratification of Albert's title by the crown;—attended therefore by Sir Bertram, he haſtened to court, and on the explanation of circumſtances, found no difficulty in being acknowledged, and permitted to do homage.

Henry at this time dreaded an invaſion from the Duke of Normandy, and the more readily confirmed him as Lord of Mowbray, judging his intereſt as an acquiſition to his cauſe, and without heſitation received his relief and fealty.

Nothing now was wanting, but to inter the ſad remains of the murdered Gertrude, which from Hubert's information, he knew to be in that chamber, which at once had involved him

him in its myſterious flames, and given him a paſſage from the ſolitary vaults of the caſtle;—the circumſtance which at that moment filled him with ſo much dread, he now found to be but cauſed by a natural reaſon—the putrid air ariſing from the corrupted body, rendered inflammable, inſtantly caught fire from the lamp, and ſpread around thoſe flaſhes, which had ſuch an effect on the mind of Albert.

"Alas!" ſaid Sir Bertram, "how little did I think, while participating the feſtive moment within theſe walls, that beneath the ſame roof, my unhappy ſiſter, Gertrude, marked the miſerable minutes of impriſonment, oppoſed by the ſame hand which tendered me the cup of pleaſure:—but no

no more, let us forget paſt ſorrow, the future bears a brighter aſpect."

The bones of the wretched victim were ſoon diſcovered, and bathed with the tears of piety, and ſilent anguiſh. Being removed from Mowbray, they were buried in a neighbouring convent, and a monument raiſed by the filial piety of Albert, to the memory of his mother, as his only poſſible tribute of affection.

Having thus finiſhed all external affairs, he now looked to the internal, and claimed the hand of Mary. Sir Bertram had always approved—ſhe was guiltleſs of her father's crimes, and to have imputed would have been injuſtice of too deep a dye; the ſoul of the Knight was beyond ſuch narrow prejudice,

prejudice, and the gentle maid consenting, they were united!

The transactions that had been performed at Mowbray Castle, rendered it too dreadful a residence to be thought of; nor was it necessary; Sir Bertram was unmarried, and Albert his nearest relative;—his house therefore became the youth's abode, and at the Knight's death, his entire property, he having adopted him as his heir.

Sir Reginald did not long remain in England;—unable to endure the torment of his own mind, and equally so, to behold the felicity of those he hated, he fled to Normandy, and soon after enrolling himself under the banners of Robert, was slain at the storming of Bayeux, by the victorious Henry, on his invasion of his brother's dutchy.

Lord

Lord Wenlock did not long ſurvive the fancied inſult to his pride;—age rather than any other complaint, brought him to the tomb. Harcourt ſucceeded to the eſtate, and regarding Jane as a ſtain to his honour, treated her with that rigour which embittered every hour of her life, and ſoon terminated her unhappy days.

De Clifford, in purſuing the ſalutary and friendly council of Sir Bertram, ſoon found its good effects;—in about a month Robert made his appearance from Italy, and took an undiſputed poſſeſſion of Normandy, inſtantly turning his thoughts to the recovery of that crown, which by primogeniture, and William's ſtipulation of ſurvivorſhip, he had an undoubted right to.

He

He landed with a powerful army at Portſmouth, and immediate hoſtilities muſt have enſued, had it not been for the intervention of Anſelm and others, who to prevent the effuſion of blood, perſuaded Robert to reſign his pretenſions to the throne of England, for an annual penſion of three thouſand marks; to which was added, as with William, a treaty of ſurvivorſhip, and a free pardon to all his adherents.

This being agreed to, their armies were diſbanded, peace reſtored, and de Clifford immediately put in his claim; not under the recent treaty, for that Henry almoſt inſtantly violated, but in conſideration of William's, this the king the more readily granted, as his name had not been ſeen among his enemies,

enemies, and as he did not conceive his title yet ſecure, he thought it prudent to attach him to his intereſt by a ready conceſſion;—this he was induced to from another reaſon, de Warren, who had received de Clifford's forfeited eſtate from William for his attachment, now appeared among the number of Robert's adherents, and ſoon after periſhed beneath the vengeance of Henry, ſo that the property but reverted to its original owner, who being taught experience from paſt miſery, enjoyed his preſent good fortune in tranquillity, nor ever more mingled in the mazes and perplexities of a court.

The old reſidence of Mowbray was not permitted to ſtand; as it was not inhabited, it might have become the receptacle

receptacle for banditti, and accordingly, by the advice of Sir Bertram, it was levelled with the ground; while in the arms of his adopted children, he paſſed the remaining years of life with felicity, and when he died, had the beſt eulogium virtue can acquire, "the prayers of the unfortunate, and tears of mourning gratitude!"

Albert himſelf, in the affections of the gentle Mary, received and beſtowed reciprocal delight, numbering many years of happineſs, nor ever failed with true and devout fervour, to acknowledge the unerring hand of Providence, which from obſcurity and dependance, had raiſed the

ORPHAN HEIR.

FINIS.